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BIBLE STORIES

AND HOW TO TELL THEM

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BY

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To

K. J. M.

WHO SHOULD ALSO SOME DAY BE
A WRITER AND A TELLER
OF STORIES: WITH HIS
FATHER'S LOVE

NOTE

MUCH of the material embodied in this book has appeared in America in the various Sunday school magazines of the Presbyterian Church of America or of the American Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and in England in *Teachers and Taught,* the young people's magazine of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, the *Guild,* the young people's magazine of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and the *Sunday School Magazine* of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and I am indebted to the respective editors for consent to publish them in this form.

WILLIAM J. MAY.

PRESTON, ENGLAND, February, 1930.

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I. THE ART OF STORY-TELLING

I

THE VALUE OF THE STORY

EVERY teacher is familiar with the persistent demand week after week, "Tell us a story." In fact, the demand is so insistent that many teachers hear it with dread. Where shall stories be found and how shall stories be told, and how shall teachers with little leisure and limited capacities tell stories so interestingly that bodies shall cease to wriggle and even minds shall be at rest? How many times we have asked ourselves such questions as these. Sometimes we have asked them when a tragic sense of failure has driven us to dark places of despair, and sometimes we have asked them when inspiration and faith have led us to the high places of vision. In these chapters we want to suggest some ways in which these questions may be answered.

Let it be said at once that there is nothing abnormal in the demand for stories. It is not a sign of that sheer perversity with which childhood is too often thoughtlessly credited. The demand for a story, the inbred love of a story is good Mother Nature's endeavor to persuade us to teach in the easiest way and in the most effective way. And we do well to remember that it is always our highest wisdom to work in harmony with nature, and it is vain to attempt to work against her.

The love of a story is one of the oldest instincts of human nature. Man loved stories before he learned to speak. He invented language that he might be able to tell others the things that had happened to him, and his first words were story words, picture words, and his first alphabet was a picture book. The power to tell a story has always been a magic power that opens the doors of friendship and influence and power. In days when man wandered from place to place

in search of food and shelter the story-teller rivaled the chieftain of the tribe in the influence he exerted and in the homage that was paid to him. The power to tell of mighty deeds was regarded as being as wonderful a possession as the power to do them.

During the Middle Ages the minstrel and the story-teller were privileged characters, free to wander at will in camp and court. An ancient manuscript in the museum at Budapest tells of the endeavor made by a Hungarian king to secure a safe conduct through Bohemia and Austria for a favorite teller of stories, and many an old chronicle bears witness to the fact that minstrels and bards could secure passports even though they were denied to ambassadors and princes. Human nature has not greatly changed. The story-teller is as popular and as privileged as he ever was; novelist or actor, film artist or after-dinner speaker, it is the man who can tell us a story whom we are eager to see and hear.

The story-teller's influence is as great as his popularity. You go to a foreign missionary meeting and listen to two speakers. One delivers a closely reasoned plea for missionary service. You listen and admire and agree. But his eloquence leaves you cold. The next man draws a picture, tells you a story, makes you see the men and women of China in their distraction and their need, tells the story of this man and that. He grips you, thrills you, and a year after you have remembered his picture and his story, though the arguments of the other man have been forgotten. That experience is an interesting sidelight on your Sunday school teaching. Stories—your stories—will be remembered and acted upon when all your arguments are forgotten.

Did not Alexander the Great declare that the stories of a wandering bard named Homer inspired him to set out upon his career of world conquest? Were not the stories of Peter the Hermit the inspiration of the Medieval Crusades?

And in 1914 it was the stories—stories of outrage and of heroism—that thronged the recruiting stations.

Jesus, who was the perfect teacher, who in his teaching left us an example that we might follow in his steps, was a great master of the art of story-telling. "Without a parable"—without a story—"spake he not unto them." He followed this method surely because he knew what was in man. The story is the natural way of teaching, and because it is natural it is effective.

More and more, people who want to capture the mind and attention of others are relying on the appeal to the imagination. The politician who gets the ear and wins the applause of the crowd is the man who can put his argument in the form of a picture, a picture which suggests a story. The manufacturer who is eager to sell you motor cars or chocolates appeals in the same fashion. He makes you see a picture of yourself eating his chocolates or riding happily in one of his cars. The display man and the advertisement writer are the real strategists in modern commerce, and the man whose shop window or whose advertisement tells the most effective story wins.

You have to make truth so attractive, so interesting to those whom you teach that they will want it so badly that they will be willing to pay the price of obedience to secure it. And if you are going to rouse interest and kindle desire to that degree, you must be willing to tell an interest-compelling, desire-arousing story—just as surely as the poster rouses your desire for the perfect cooking that can only be secured by the use of a certain flour or the life-long possession of that schoolgirl complexion which will be the reward of using a particular soap. Your custom would never be secured by elaborate arguments concerning the chemical composition of the soap, but it is won by the picture, the story, of that schoolgirl complexion.

We have a great asset as Sunday school teachers in the fact that the Bible is the world's great storybook. It is an asset whose value we have never yet fully understood. The Bible is the record of a great revelation, but the revelation is in the form of a story, the story of God's revelation of his love and purpose, the story of the education of a people that they might be a people for God's own possession. And that story is told through the lives and characters of a series of men and women. What is more, they were people who, in thought and feeling, were strangely like the people we meet from day to day. They dressed in a different fashion, spoke a different language, lived in a different style; but they had to fight against anger and hate and cowardice just as we have to do; and they found it just as difficult to do right and be honest and love the man who had done them a mean trick as we do.

By way of illustration, take such a story as that of Abraham and Lot. The story in bare outline, as told in the book of Genesis, is familiar enough, and Lot is one of the utter villains of the Old Testament. But, knowing what you do of the strangely mixed nature of human character, do you think Lot had no streak of goodness, no particle of gratitude left in him? Genesis tells only of the decision and the result. Yet it presupposes a struggle and a conflict of desire. Lot was tempted to do the big, generous, splendid thing and take the unattractive, undesirable Judean hills instead of the fertile, generous Jordan valley. Lot is the man with a single eye for what he calls the main chance, the prospect of prosperity. But even in such a man gratitude was not wholly dead, nor the desire for good things wholly lost. The interest of the story is in that conflict of desire.

Abraham, too, must have had his bad hours. Something in his heart would tell him that he was a fool to allow Lot to take such an advantage of him. When he faced the bare

Judean hills there must have been in his mind many hard and bitter thoughts about Lot, who had so ungratefully rewarded him, and he must have thought that it was foolish to be generous and unwise to be forbearing. Yet in the end of the day it is Lot's choice of the prosperous, well-watered land which accomplishes his destruction, and Abraham prospers in the difficult place.

Again, through our lack of imagination in dealing with the story of Abraham and Isaac we have usually pictured Abraham as a stern man of iron will, as completely devoid of emotion as if he had been a kind of theological symbol like x or y in an equation in algebra. But try to imagine the feelings in Abraham's mind; the conflict between what he feels to be loyalty to the will of God and his passionate love for the child of his old age on whom all his hopes were set. The hand raised to slay the bound lad upon the rough altar of piled stones must have been trembling and afraid, and Abraham must have found it hard indeed to resist the appeal for pity in the eyes of his son. Acknowledge that the sacrifice of the first-born was common in that day, remember that the head of the tribe had the power of life and death, and you still have to reckon with all the mighty power of human love and the almost equally strong passion for a son to fill the father's place; it is no longer a piece of curious theology which you are teaching, but a tremendously human story.

All the men and women of the Bible are as real and as alive as Abraham and Lot and Isaac. That makes the Bible the ideal textbook of religion, morals, and manners. God embodies his truth in a tale and teaches us by the most perfect of all educational methods, by telling us stories.

I expect that by this time some of you are saying that it is easy to say that we ought to tell stories, but it is another matter to practice it. But it is as natural to tell stories as it is to delight in hearing them. Unfortunately, we have not

all discovered our story-telling capacity. If you have witnessed a street accident, or had a quarrel, or been on an interesting holiday expedition, you can tell a story when you reach home. You tell what happened, what people said, and how you felt, and without realizing it you have told a story. Every story in the world comes down to this: some one did something to somebody else, and it had certain results for them both and probably for other people as well. When you tell your story you tell also what people did and said and say something of how they felt. By the use of imagination you put yourself in their places.

Had you been in Abraham's place, what would you have thought and said about Lot? How would you have felt about Isaac, and how would you have treated him on that last journey, and what would your feelings have been on the way home. There is your story. And the art of making and telling stories is like every other art: it is not learned by longing, but by practice.

II

FINDING THE STORY

EVERY year witnesses the publication of whole series of new books of children's stories and stories written that teachers may tell them to children, until one feels that every need must have been met many times. Yet the cry of despairing teachers who know not where to find a story for next Sunday seems to grow more loud and more clamorous. One always hesitates to recommend particular stories or even books of stories. The book which one teacher finds wonderfully useful completely fails to appeal to some other teacher whose outlook is different, and the story that one teacher tells with entrancing power is merely wearisome when told by the teacher to whom it has not made the same appeal. It is a fundamental law of story-telling that the story must capture you before you can use it to capture the attention and interest of anyone else. That is specially true when the "anyone" happens to be a group of boys or girls.

It would be the easiest thing possible to fill two or three pages with a list of books of stories suitable for telling children of various ages, but it would be more confusing than educative in its effect. I would rather try to help you to find your own stories. The world is so full of stories that we who are story-tellers find our real problem consists in choosing which story we shall tell of all the stories that are waiting to be told. We are like children before the crowded window of a toy shop at Christmas time with a single coin in our hands, embarrassed by the wealth of our opportunity. If we have difficulty in finding stories, it is not that story material is lacking, but that we lack the cultivated vision and the trained capacity to see it and use it.

The Real Story

For many teachers there is an attraction about the true story, the story of real life, which is completely lacking in the more imaginative type of stories. The real story is not easier to build and tell; it is more difficult. If you are drawing a portrait from life, you must be faithful to the figure you have chosen. You cannot make Abraham Lincoln physically beautiful or make Oliver Cromwell a plaster saint. But if the real story is that which makes the greatest appeal to you, it is probably the type of story you will tell with best effect. Where will you find them?

Read the newspapers, and you will find that every day splendid deeds are being done by heroic men and women. Only to-day my daily paper tells of two doctors who allowed themselves to be inoculated with cancer germs and of a girl who deliberately cultivated gangrene that certain new methods of treatment might be tried; while in another paper I find in the current issue the story of Socrates, the story of a Chinese missionary who carried disease germs to America in his own body that a cure might be found for an obscure disease, and a story of a little Hindu girl who fed and housed a father and brother out of her prize money as collector of pupils for a native school in the Punjab.

They are not all stories to be told to little children; but boys of the hero-worship age, who think that the only heroes of to-day are Tom Mix and "Raffles," would be the better for the hearing of them.

Of course, there are the undying stories of the saints and heroes of other days all waiting for you to use them, but one has some sympathy with the boys who plaintively inquired, "Are all the heroes dead?" Usually those who make the strongest appeal are those who are nearest to our own time. Dr. Nansen's work for refugees is not nearly as well known as it should be, nor is the work of Grenfell of

Labrador. "Peace hath her victories no less renowned than those of war."

The Nature Story

The well-told nature story is having a considerable popularity in our day even among children who know little of nature except the plain trees in the street and the fruit in the coster's barrows. The primeval love of nature abides deeply in man, and nature lends itself to the art of the storyteller. A great French specialist has said that some day an artist will arise who will weave the facts concerning the circulation of the blood into a tale as fascinating as any story in the Arabian Nights. You may laugh at that as a fantastic dream, but it is typical of the dreams that come true. The world of nature is a vast storybook with colored pictures on every page, and in every picture there is a glimpse of the face of God, "your Heavenly Father."

Every flower has a story and every tree. That old oak tree with his giant strength and his kindly shelter—has he no story to whisper to you, no gathered wisdom of experience that he can impart? That sweet pea which is so frail and so fragrant in her loveliness has to be given an unlovely stick to cling to. Has it no tale of the debt it owed to the stick? You planted a bean in a glass jar for your primary children, and when the bean baby came out of its bed it was hunch-backed. What a tragedy was that hunch-backed baby! But you set it in the sunlight, and it grew straight. There is an obvious story for you there.

When I came downstairs the other day I saw that some industrious spider had thrown two perfectly parallel threads from the hall lamp to the wall. It was exactly like a double aërial. Now what did Mrs. Spider hear as she listened in that day? Did she hear the Grizzle Skipper planning to carry off the Painted Lady from the summer garden?

If you could persuade that bunch of flowers that some one plucked and flung away when they were halfway home, too tired to carry them farther, to tell their own story, it would be more effective than any sermon. If Bobby Bunny, who was sometimes fed and sometimes forgotten, could read a few pages from his private diary, how would his owner feel? There is no limit to the number of nature stories that can be told.

The Bible Story

A complaint about the Bible story is that it is so familiar. When you come to lesson preparation you sigh: "Here's this story come round again. How can I make it fresh?" Tell the old story in a new way. Browning, in "The Ring and the Book," makes a series of people tell the same story, and each one tells it in a very different fashion. Try it with the Bible stories. Here is the story of the man who was let down through the roof. If one of his four friends told the story, he would emphasize the plot to get the man to Jesus, the struggle through the crowd, and the healing as seen from the roof. The man himself would tell of his despair, of the painful journey, of his fear, and of his amazing joy when he found himself healed; while if one of the spectators told the story, some one standing in the doorway who could see the happenings both in the courtyard and in the house, much could be made of the interruption caused by the uncovering of the roof. Or you may tell the story in the manner of John Bunyan. Mr. Sympathy first thought of the possibility, and talked it over with his friend, Mr. Helpful; they secured Mr. Prayerful to help them, and then Mr. Perseverance, who devised the plan of letting their friend down through the roof.

At Christmas time how you despair of finding anything new to say about a story so familiar. Have you asked one

of the shepherds to tell you his story of that wonderful night? Some one has written the story of the shepherd who stayed to guard the flocks when all the rest went to Bethlehem. The stable boy at Bethlehem could tell a story, too, of the strange happenings of that great night, and can you imagine the tale the innkeeper would tell to those who came after of the way his inn had missed its chance? What a story Joseph had to tell! It is strange that he is so shadowy a figure in the gospel story. And the wise men! In some far Eastern town in a lamp-lit room those three men opened the treasures of their hearts and told all they had felt and known on that strange quest. But that would be a story for he elder scholars.

So for the Easter story what a company you have, and each one has his own story to tell, his own gospel to write.

Do not despair because you have not seen all these things before. I have tried to point out paths that you may follow. The power to see suggestions and to fashion stories is like every other capacity: it grows by being used. Within you is the power to see life in this way, if you will but cultivate it.

III

BUILDING THE STORY

EVERY well-told story is like a fine picture hung on the walls of the corridors of memory, a picture that will arrest thought and attention each time we pass, a picture whose message will be so clear that we cannot see the picture without reading it. Dr. Henry Van Dyke's prayer that he may never tag a moral to a tale or tell a story without a meaning may well be adopted by the teacher. The story well told to a child has a touch of immortality in it, just like a great picture. We can read the truth of divine motherhood in Raphael's Madonna in spite of its sixteenth century dress, and with increasing years and widening knowledge the meaning of the stories of childhood grows from more to more, while more of reverence in us dwells.

There was a day when the story of Jesus walking on the water was just a wonder story to us—and nothing more. Now we look at the same picture and find other and greater meaning in it; we see One who comes o'er life's tempestuous sea to us for our salvation. The build of the boat, which once was so interesting, now matters no more than the draperies of Raphael's Madonna. So will the stories you are telling to-day be remembered and studied in the years ahead and deeper, fuller truth discovered in them.

These great achievements did not just "happen." They were not dashed off in some hour of easy inspection. Behind each one is a story of hard study and long preparation. It took Beethoven, with all his understanding of the power and meaning of sound, years of dreary toil in theory and practice under dead and living masters before he could move the hearts of thousands as with the inspiration of a moment. But was not the writing of the Sonatas worth it all? As

Henry Ward Beecher came from a service where he had lifted the hearts of men to the presence of God some one asked him: "How long did it take you to prepare that sermon, sir? I suppose it was easily done." Beecher looked down with pity on the foolish man. "The preparation for that sermon lasted forty years, sir." Was it not worth it?

If your stories are going to be remembered long after you are forgotten, go on teaching their message long after you are silent, they will demand study, thought, preparation, care. But for the achieving of so great an end no thought is too much, no preparation too exacting, no care too much. We are working for immortality. "Of this thing be certain," says Carlyle, "wouldst thou plant for eternity, then plant into the deep, infinite faculties of man, his fantasy and heart."

Background

Few things are of greater importance than that the artist should have the right and proper background. The story must put each character in his own appropriate setting. Here great demand is made upon the story-teller's powers of imagination; for imagination is not, as so many people suppose, the power to suggest that which never was and never could be, but simply the power to "imagine" life as it was and is and to help others to see it as in a brilliantly painted picture. If you know Basil Matthews' "Paul the Dauntless," one of the finest reconstructions of the life of the first century in recent literature, you will know how much the story owes to the judicious use of background.

This is how the book opens. "A boy stood, one spring morning, on the quayside below the great city where he lived. His eyes and ears were full of the strange music and color of the life of a busy harbor. The sing-song chant of the sailors as they pulled the ropes through the creaking

pulleys; the swing of bales of goat's hair cloth from the quay, and the thud as they dropped into the hold of the ships; the discontented grunt of a tawny camel as the stuffed sacks were lifted from the quayside and lashed on his back; the splash and gleam of oars in the water as a boat put across the harbor, breaking the reflections of ships and masts into a thousand ripples—all made him throb with that desire which tingles in a boy as he watches ships go down to the sea."

Now observe how the author builds up a scene that compels your attention. See how he suggests movement to your eyes; sailors, wharf men, camels, oars, ships, even the very water—all are moving. That emphasis upon the movement in the scene is not accidental; it is part of the author's skill, and a method you must copy. Children particularly are interested in life, but not in still life. Remember the attraction of the *working* model in the toy-shop window.

But there is not only movement in that picture, there is sound in it—"sing-song chant, creaking pulleys, thud of bales, discontented grunt of a camel, splash of oars." You are not only seeing the picture; you are hearing it. Much of your success in building your background will depend on your use of words which suggest action, words of movement and the sound of movement.

In telling Bible stories, or any stories of Eastern life, you will find great help in using colorful words. The author who gets what we usually call "the magic of the Orient" into his stories does it by using words that describe color and scent. His scenes are dressed gorgeously in a revel of colors, and all his descriptions are in terms of splendor. He conducts you through a world of silver pillars, golden thrones, caverns ablaze with flashing gems, scarlet and purple hangings, and costumes no less splendid and elaborate. His world is full

of rich fragrance, ointments of delicate odor, and scents that hold the essence of ten thousand flowers.

All that world of splendor and beauty is yours to wander in; but its very wealth is likely to prove your peril. The temptation is to make the background so colorful and elaborate that it fills the canvas, and your story is like a theatrical production where the scenery is so wonderful that you admire the setting instead of watching the play. Remember, the value of background is that it "throws up" the characters in the story. Wisely used, its value is immense. You cannot think of the story of Hagar and Ishmael without its setting of cloudless blue sky and scorching yellow sand; or of any little New Testament church without the frowning temple of Apollo or Venus in the background.

Balance and Composition

The foreground is even more important than the background. You have only so much space, so large a canvas on which to work, and you have a certain number of figures who must be included. What space shall each have? What is their relative importance? That is one of the first questions you must decide. Which figure in the story do you really want to stand out. If you are telling the story of the healing of Jairus' daughter, shall it be the father, the child, or Jesus? That again will depend on the purpose you have in mind and the particular side of the story you wish to emphasize.

The temptation, for example, in telling the story of David and Goliath is to allow Goliath to fill the canvas, the difficulty is to prevent him doing so. When you have sketched your background of the great hills on either side the valley, the massed armies swaying to and fro in their excitement and each shouting the name of their champion and hurling defiance at their foes, what a temptation it is to dwell upon

the bulky proportions of Goliath, his great size, his loud voice, his magnificent armor, his enormous weapons until at last the enormous figure of Goliath straddles across the canvas and David, your real hero, is a contemptible little figure in the background. You have to make David's moral greatness tower above Goliath's physical supremacy. That is one of the perils against which we always have to be on our guard in building stories.

We have to be careful, too, to see that the various parts of the story have their proper share of interest and attention. It is possible to spend so much time over the introduction that you have no time for the story, and it becomes like a building where a great pillared portico leads into a two-roomed cottage. One of the most brilliant of modern short story writers says that in planning her stories she allots a certain proportionate space to each episode in the story and then takes care that each episode has its proper share of space and not more.

That is not to say that in, say, a story of three thousand words, each of four episodes would be allotted 750 words. Some, by reason of their greater importance, would claim more; others would receive less. If you were planning the story of David and Goliath, you would not allot as much space to David's preparation as you would to the actual fight; but, on the other hand, you would allot more space to the preparation than you would to the pursuit and defeat of the Philistine.

So you will learn to build up your word picture in the mind of a child as a fine artist compasses a great picture upon his canvas. You, too, will learn to use the background that enhances the importance of the figures in the background and which helps to produce the impression you most desire. You will learn the use of color in words, but you will have this larger opportunity; your figures will move and live and

speak; you will be able to appear to the ear as well as to the eye, to the child's passion for movement as well as to his love of color. Not all your skill will come at once, nor will all your capacity reveal itself at the first attempt. The Royal Academician of to-day was yesterday drawing crude figures with colored chalks on scrap of brown paper. By thought and study and practice, above all by that taking pains which is the essence of true genius, he has attained his mastery. These suggestions are signposts on the road to interest, and not only to interest, but to service whose value is eternal. "They a corruptible, but we an incorruptible crown."

IV

ADAPTING THE STORY

The Bible is so familiar to us who are Sunday school teachers that we are slow to recognize its value to the story-teller. There is no collection of stories, however new, that is in any way comparable to it. Ruskin, who was no mean authority where the needs of children were concerned, said: "The Bible would be preëminently the child's book even though it had no value above other books." While, more recently, one of the greatest Continental experts on child psychology has declared that we might, if we lacked material, give children nothing but the Bible and yet satisfy every craving of their natures, because the Bible contains every type of tale that appeals to the child. "Its stories are the product of a child nation and therefore very close to the heart of the child."

But this does not exonerate us from the necessity of adapting the Bible stories to the child's understanding, nor of choosing just those stories which are best suited to the mental development of the children we are teaching. We have to entirely revise the half-humorous statement of Dr. Dooley: "It doesn't matter much what you teach children as long as they don't like it." The truth is, of coure, that you can never really teach children anything unless they do like it. The only lessons that are effectively taught are those which are in line with the child's natural interests. "The spontaneous interests of childhood become the real, dominant factors in education, whether we like it or not."

The story interests of childhood may be roughly classified as follows: the Realistic period, the Imaginative period, the Heroic period, and the Romantic period.

THE REALISTIC PERIOD. (Corresponding largely to the beginner age.)

The little person in the beginner department is usually somewhat a matter-of-fact little soul, not yet greatly interested in happenings outside the circle of his own little world. Imagination has not yet developed in any appreciable measure. Attention is centered on the things the child knows most intimately—mother and father, dogs, and cats, other children of their own age. That being so, the people in your stories must be such as those with whom your beginners are already acquainted. The children will get over the problem of strangeness by investing the new acquaintance with the characteristics of the old ones.

You have a whole gallery of Bible babies of whom you can tell; there is the baby Moses, little Samuel, the boy Joseph, the baby Isaac, and the boy David; and in the New Testament there is Timothy and the Babe of Bethlehem, the dearest baby of all. The Christmas story never grows old; and if you need material to guide imagination, there are always the eleventh and twelfth chapters of the story of Ben Hur to guide and inspire you.

You have all the world of nature's babies to help you, too, if your beginners know the countryside; kittens and puppies, chickens and lambs, all will help you to tell of the great Father's love and care just as surely as they helped the greatest of all teachers long ago. The New Testament stories of healing are also splendid material for this age, for sickness and recovery are inside the experience of most of your little people. But we remember the limitations of the beginner's world, and what a different world you see from the eyes of four feet nothing!

THE IMAGINATIVE PERIOD. (Corresponding largely to the primary age.)

There are no clean breaks, of course, between these various periods in a child's life, any more than except in the calendar you say, "Spring begins to-day." Yet there is a change from winter to spring. In the mind of the child there is a day when the barriers of the world of limited experience fall away and the child steps into the land of make-believe where fancy roams freely and where anything may happen. Here you are freed from many limitations in the material of your stories. "Nothing," says R. L. Stevenson, "can stagger a child's faith; he accepts the clumsiest substitutes and can swallow the most startling incongruities. The chair he has just been besieging as a castle is taken away for the accomodation of a morning visitor, and he is nothing abashed; he can skirmish by the hour with a stationary coal scuttle; in the midst of the enchanted pleasance he can see, without sensible shock, the gardener soberly digging potatoes for the day's dinner."

A famous modern psychologist says of these years in his autobiography: "If the flowers in the garden had raised their voices in song, if the birds on the boughs had called and spoken to me—nay, if a tree had changed into a beautiful fairy or a toad in the shaded path of our dark avenue into a witch, it would have been only natural."

The truth is that the primary child does not live in a world where possibilities are limited by law and circumstance, and for Christ to walk on the water is no more of a miracle than for fishes to swim in it. There is no need to remind you of the wealth of material opened up in the Biblical stories and in the world of nature at this time. But may I suggest that there is a largely unworked field in the pictures created by the vivid imagery of the Bible language. The Psalmist who pictured God calling out the stars one by one and calling them

each by their name was surely a shepherd. That was how the Eastern shepherd called his sheep, calling each by name. He saw God as the shepherd of the stars. "He telleth the number of the stars. He calleth them by their names."

In the same fashion you can develop the stories behind such phrases as "The treasuries of the snow," "The storehouse of the rain." This, too, is the age when many of the Christ legends may be told.

THE HEROIC PERIOD. (Corresponding largely to the junior age.)

Children grow out of that age of make-believe and come once more to a time when they demand stories of real people who did real things. Girls are ready to vote their brother's books more interesting than their own for much the same reasons. Once more the Bible offers a wealth of material. You have a long list of stories in the Old Testament specially appealing to scholars of junior age from the days when Abraham leaves the great commercial center of Ur of the Chaldees and goes on the long pilgrimage to Egypt and back to Canaan; right down to the days of Jeremiah. Think of Moses' defiance of Pharaoh; of Joshua, who may have helped to build the Pyramids, becoming captain of the army and leader of Israel; of Samson's rise and fall; of David and his valiants; of the splendid days when the Queen of Sheba came to vivit Solomon; of the fading glory of the later generations, and always there is some heroic figure in the midst.

One great asset lies in the fact that the Bible heroes are not *plaster* saints. Gideon and Joshua are heroes, but they sometimes fail, and the story is as candid in its story of their littleness as of their greatness. At this age physical bravery makes a stronger appeal than courage, and children are usually inclined to be a little selfish in their attitude and to make

the question, "What good will it be to me?" their test question. So that the story of the defeat which follows the breaking of the moral law is as valuable as a method of character training as is the story of the victory that rewards obedience to the recognized will of God. Cause and effect make a peculiarly strong appeal just now.

The children are forming their own gallery of heroes during these years. It is our task and our opportunity to see that the gallery of heroes contains figures really worthy of admiration and imitation and figures for whom the advancing years will bring increasing admiration. The danger of the cheap hero of the movie film and the novelette is not the harm done in these years as much as the mischief wrought later when children grow old enough to see the hollow sham of the pasteboard and buckram heroes to whom they gave their boyish worship. With only unworthy and unreal figures in their gallery of heroes, they are in peril of crying in disillusion and despair, "There are no heroes, and there is no heroism." The high advantage of the Bible heroes is that they grow more splendid with growing knowledge and deepening understanding. The more you know of Gideon and Jeremiah the greater is your admiration and the closer you feel your human kinship with these men who endured and suffered, who fell and rose again. Let us give our children heroes of whom they will not grow tired.

The Romantic Period. (Corresponding largely with the intermediate and senior ages.)

The age of hero worship does not end with the dawn of adolescence, but merges into the age of increasing self-consciousness which comes with adolescence. There are many outward and visible signs of the changing thought. Dress and appearance become matters of considerable importance, and we reach the days when romance becomes really interesting.

Now for the first time you may venture to tell the story of Ruth and Naomi; Jacob's love for Rachel may be told from a new standpoint. David's love for Jonathan will make a strong appeal, and a little later you can tell the stories of the love of Hosea and Jeremiah for their homeland, the love of Jesus for Jerusalem, of the amazing love of God for the whole world until it all culminates in 'He loved me and gave himself for me.'

Now dawns the age when pupils begin to be greatly interested in problems of conduct. You can no longer satisfy them with "It is right because I say it is right." They want to know *why* it is right. Your stories now must have a new and deeper note in them. Previously you have been concerned only with events; now you must dwell more upon the motives behind events. Adolescent boys and girls want to see the workings of character and action and destiny. Nor is it difficult. What a study of character you have in Jonathan, for example! Must he be true to his father, whose actions he despises, and who yet is his father and his king; or to David, his friend. Jonathan puts David on the throne that he himself might have filled.

Old Eli is numbered among the rogues of the Bible, but how much did Samuel owe to him in those years when the blind old man moved about the temple courts with his hand upon the shoulder of the little serving lad. Was Paul justified in refusing to take John Mark with him because he had once failed? Tell your stories from the inner side so that your scholars see the tangled thread of good and ill, of free will and circumstance that goes to the making of the tapestry of character. The most familiar story will be fresh if it is told in this way.

You cannot make a survey of this character without being compelled to realize that it is not blind chance that has made the Bible the book it is. Inspiration is something

much deeper than a question of mere words; it means more than providing a collection of proof texts. God has put into our hand a textbook of teaching that was sufficient and efficient when men told their tales of wisdom in the flickering light of the camp fire and is equally efficient in days when education is scientific and psycholobical. Our privilege and our task is to write something of that truth in the lives of those we teach.

V

FIRST AID TO IMAGINATION

Our real problem is not the truth of the Bible but its interest, for attention and memory are not captured and held by the thing which is true, but by the thing which is interesting. The most fantastic of detective stories will hold you from your bed; you cannot put it down until you have finished it; while the dry treatise, packed full of scientific fact, will send you to sleep in spite of yourself. It does not lack truth, but it fails to hold you because it does not interest you. Nothing is more true than the science of political economy. It is concerned with the intimate things of daily life, the essentrials of our existence: bread and butter and boots and clothes —things whose "truth" cannot be ignored or denied. Yet it has earned for itself the nickname of the "dismal science," because those who have tried to teach it have failed to make it interesting. The truth of the Bible does not need either apology or defense from any of us. If we can succeed in making it interesting, the truth of the Bible will win its own way.

Interest is one of the large secrets of successful teaching. No effort is needed to try to remember the things which have really interested you; the problem is to forget them. Happily for us who use it, the Bible seldom attempts to teach morals in the abstract. Truth is embodied in a tale, in a life, in a picture, in a story. Our task and opportunity is to get the story out of the book and into the life. For to teach the story is to convey the truth. The morals of the stories in the Bible are never tacked on; they are woven in. They will not be lost when the surface is rubbed; they are inlaid. You cannot read such stories as those of Jacob or David or Jeremiah and miss the moral of them, any more

than you can miss the teaching in such stories as Jesus' parables of the lost sheep or the Good Samaritan.

Now, then, shall we set about our task of making these familiar Bible stories interesting to modern boys and girls, whose imaginative appetites have already become jaded with a surfeit of sensational fiction?

THINK OUT YOUR CHARACTER.

You must see him yourself before you can make anyone else see him. Give people names. It sounds a trivial thing. But we all find it hard to take any interest in "Mr. Anonymous." Knowing the name of a character invests him at once with some degree of life and personality. He is separated from the crowd. Find your names in the Old Testament for the unnamed New Testament characters or in such storehouses as the friends to whom Paul sends greetings at the end of his epistles. You may find yourself in curious situations sometimes as a result of it, but you must accept the risk. I was telling the story of the man borne of four, whom Jesus healed, and I had called him Amos. After the lecture one good man came to express his appreciation and to assure me that he had never realized before that the prophet Amos was the man who was let down through the roof. Even with such risks the gain outweighs the loss. Now you must help your listeners to make a picture of your character in their minds. Usually you are free and unhampered. Only in the case of Paul is there any authentic tradition of appearance. Traditionally Paul is described as a little bald-headed man, with hooked nose, weak eyes shadowed by bushy eyebrows, bent shoulders, and short legs. Dress him in faded striped headdress, the old brown, travel-stained, patched traveling cloak, "the cloak I left at Troas," put in the scars of stonings and scourgings; the deep lines drawn by penitence and care of all

the churches, and you have the man who describes his own personal appearance as weak and contemptible.

For the most part, you can make your character's appearance fit your impression of him. "Being the kind of man he was, what would he look like?" Would he be tall or short, fine or forbidding, handsome or hideous? Abraham, for example, is a pioneer. Surely he should look the part. His name calls up the picture of a tall man with piercing eyes set far apart on either side of the prominent nose that marks the leader of men. His lips, as far as you can see them beneath the full beard and moustache, are full, and his mouth is wide, for he is a man of generous instincts. Under the striped headcloth with its circlet of camel hair rope you divine the high, domed head of the man who has a genius for religion. Set him on a camel, dress him in a flowing cloak of wide stripes of blue and white, put in his hand the long spear with its streaming tassel of dyed horse hair that denotes the chief, and you have a figure that satisfies the mind and captures the imagination.

Isaac, his son, is a man of a totally different type. 'Isaac was a dweller in tents." He is the type of man who will strive for peace at any price, inclined to be delicate and soft-spoken, something of a mystic and a dreamer, who walks slowly. His face is delicately cut, pale beneath its tan, his hands are smooth, and his robes of chocolate and orange are soft and fastidiously kept. Isaac is as soft as putty in the hands of his womenfolk, and looks it—a silk-covered, down cushion of a man.

For a contrast, try to conjure up the picture of Elijah. See him with his rough sheepskin coat dragged about his tall, gaunt body, pulled in about his waist with a strip of untanned skin. See his great hairy legs with his feet thrust into rough sandals of skin, fastened crudely about his ankles. Watch him on Carmel as with outflung hand he taunts the priests

of Baal, his untrimmed hair and beard blown about his lean face, looking as if it had been rough-carved out of a piece of old oak; hear his harsh voice and his bitter, taunting laugh, and contrast him with the sleek, effeminate priests of Baal, men enervated by luxury and vice. You have more than a portrait there; you have a whole drama.

You have an amazing variety of types in the portrait gallery of the Old Testament. Isaiah was a courtier, accustomed to the ways of palaces and princes, and he would never be able to lay that air of delicacy aside, even though for two years he walks Jerusalem in the single coarse, rough garment of a slave. Amos, on the other hand, was a backwoodsman, as great an offense in dress and accent to the cultured people of his day as Oliver Cromwell, with his ill-cut clothes and rasping voice, was to the English parliament, or as Abraham Lincoln was to the American Congress. It is wonderful how quickly these men of the Bible step out of the pages of a book and become living people as soon as they are invested with a little imagination. If you find it difficult to start, consult some one else's version, look at pictures. You may not agree with their delineations, any more than you agree with my portraits, but the very disagreement will set your own mind working and helps your education.

When you have thought out appearance and dress, your character is still no more than a lay figure waiting for that greater imagination which shall breathe into him the breath of life. You have to place your character in the special circumstances which your story demands. It is not sufficient to put yourself in his place. His temperament may differ widely from yours. But, being the man he is, how will he react to these special circumstances and conditions, and how will he show his reaction? What will he do with his hands? What expression will be upon his face and in his eyes? What tone will come into his voice? Will he move quickly

or slowly, or will he be frozen with immobility? If your character is to live you must show him as a live man. Your picture must not be a painting of still life, but like those pictures which Bunyan tells us Christian saw in the Interpreter's House, full of life and movement.

The Bible contents itself usually by saying that men did this or that. You must learn to ask your story, Why did he do this and not that? It is obvious that frequently men did things which were incredibly difficult; yet they would not find the difficult thing any easier than you find it. Then there must have been conflict, a temptation to take the lower road. Why not tell something of the fight men fought, of the temptations they conquered, until those whom we teach see them as they really were, men and women who met our foes on our battle fields and conquered them because they fought on when the fighting and the wounds seemed vain, or were defeated because they trusted in the arm of flesh and it failed them, as it fails us still.

To take a familiar illustration. We tell the story of Jonathan's love for David and of his loyalty to his friend as one of the most beautiful, most splendid stories ever written. So indeed it is. But how often, when a boy is at the age when friendship and loyalty are the strongest things in his life, we tell the story in a fashion that makes him say, "If only it was as easy for me to be loyal as it was for Jonathan!" What an opportunity we miss when we forget to stress the fight and the struggle Jonathan had! Put yourself in his place and use your imagination. Jonathan is heir to the throne, but he knew that his father is so deservedly unpopular and David's popularity is growing so rapidly that when Saul dies it will be David and not Jonathan who will be crowned king. Jonathan need not do anything to remove his rival. He only has to avoid the risks he runs from his father's mad jealously and say notthing, and David will be

slain and his own way to the throne of Israel made clear. What an awful fight that must have been! The splendor of Jonathan's loyalty is only seen when you recognize how terribly hard it was for him to be loyal. All the men and women of the Bible can be made to live in the same way. Was Lot so utterly abandoned that he felt no impulse to do the splendid, unselfish thing and take the unattractive, perilous country and leave Jordan to Abraham, and was there no conflict in his heart before he surrendered to self-interest? Did Isaiah, who had lived softly all his days, find it easy to walk Jerusalem's streets in a slave's garment and rough sandals? Paul marched breast forward from city to city carrying his gospel, but was he never tempted to turn his back in utter despair?

If men and women had these deep, strong emotions, they would show them. How? That is the question you must answer if you would make these people live. In telling the story of "The Grateful Samaritan," for example, the one leper out of the ten whom Jesus healed, who returned to give thanks, I pictured him thus, telling the story through the lips of an unknown disciple:

"His foul rags still flapped about him, the leper bell still jangled at his waist, he still had his begging bowl and staff in the hand he waved to attract Jesus' attention. . . . As soon as he reached us he knelt upon the ground and caught hold of the hem of Jesus' robe and kissed it, as with tears streaming down his face he poured forth his gratitude again and again. . . . The Samaritan turned to go. As he did so he heard the jangle of the leper's bell. Suddenly he seemed to realize that he no longer needed it. He was whole! He tore the bell from his waist and hurled it down the hillside among the rocks and flung his begging bowl after it."

I have added nothing improbable to the story. It was quite likely that in his overwhelming joy and his eager gratitude

he would be oblivious of the familiar clanging of the leper bell and of the begging bowl in his hand. It is equally probable that when he realized that the marks of the evil days were still with him in some such way as I have pictured he would fling them away. But to fill in the outline of the story in this way; to endeavor to supply what the rigidly compressed Bible narrative takes for granted does do much to make the Bible a book that lives, whose stories live again in the minds and hearts of those who listen to them.

May I make one reservation. It is a personal judgment; you may not agree. But I feel that the character of Jesus is beyond the reach of our imagination. I have a feeling akin to horror when Jesus is made the center of purely imaginary happenings and words are put into his mouth for which the Gospels give us no warrant. Gospel stories may be told afresh through the lips and eyes of other characters. The innkeeper of Bethlehem would have his own story of the first Christmas night; blind Bartimeus would have a tale to tell of the day by the Jericho road; Zebedee's story of the call of James and John would be of fascinating interest. But the character of our Lord himself means so much to the world and the peril of distorting is so great if we attempt to tamper with it that I feel it is as the ark of God which must not be touched. Tell the gospel stories afresh, if you will, but do not invent things about our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who was so much more than the carpenter and the prophet out of Narazeth who went about doing good. It is the difference between such a book as "By an Unknown Disciple," and John Oxenham's "Hidden Years."

VI

HOW STORIES ARE MADE

THE task of the story-teller is to take that which is true and make it interesting. Facts may be stubborn things, but the most stubborn facts may be so dressed and decorated that they shall be made things of beauty and charm. A page of figures may be true, but few people find them attractive. Yet if some one with imagination and understanding translates those figures into diagrams they reveal an unsuspected power to interest and fascinate. To say that the earth moves round the sun on an elliptical orbit and that the inclination of the earth upon its axis produces certain changes of the seasons and of the duration of daylight is perfectly true. But when you illustrate your truth with even such homemade models as an orange and a candle you have made dead facts live and dull things interesting.

No one can work up very much interest in the kings of Israel and Judah as long as they are mere names to us; and if we are not interested we do not remember. If we can see those kings in the setting of their own time, share their hopes and fears, their temptations and their triumphs, we feel that we know them. Imagination added to the historical fact makes it interesting. The essence of imagination is the power to image, which really means the power to put yourself in the other person's place. If an experience has happened to you, it is not difficult to talk about it and make it interesting. Imagination means putting yourself into the other man's place, seeing things through his eyes, feeling not merely for him, but with him, so that you can talk about his experiences as vividly as though they were your own. If you would make the story of Palm Sunday live for little children, you must tell the story not as you would have seen it with the eyes and

mind of a grown-up person, but as a little child would have seen it. If you would tell a story for boys, you must give a boy's eye view of the events, emphasizing those things in the story in which a boy's interests would center.

As an illustration of how a story is built up, take the story of the discovery of the book of the law during the reign of Josiah (2 Kings 22, 23; 2 Chron. 34, 35). The first task to our hands is to build up the background, the scenery, of the story. Religion in Israel is at a very low ebb. The brief reform under Hezekiah had passed away. There is an altar for sun worship on the roof of the temple itself; heathen altars in the courtyard, bronze horses and chariots to the sun at the temple gates, and a figure of the goddess Ashtaroth in the very house of God. In spite of the labors of men like Jeremiah, the temple of God was neglected and falling into ruin. Josiah had commenced a scheme for its renovation and repair, and when he is eighteen he takes affairs into his own hands and launches his campaign against the heathen priests and their idolatrous worship. Apparently it was during this campaign that the book of the law was discovered. Chronicles is the older story, but it seems incredible that he waited until the eighteenth year of his reign before making a move against heathen influences. Children of the junior age would not be interested in the spiritual aspects of this state of things, but in the outward manifestation.

Repairing the Temple

If a boy had stood in the temple court at Jerusalem that far-away day, what would he have seen and heard. Tall scaffolding about the walls, where trowels and hammers rang upon hewed stones and saws rasped and bit their way through sweet-smelling beams of cedar; where hammers beat steadily as carpenters drove home the nails and workmen called to each other for this and that. Fires hissed and

roared where smiths blew upon them with blow pipes, and heavy hammers thudded and clanged as they beat out the hot iron upon the anvils.

White-robed priests picked their way here and there through the confusion as they went about their duties or offered the occasional sacrifices upon the great altar, but worshipers were few. High up on the temple roof men were pulling down the tall altar, like a blunt pyramid, where men had made offerings to sun and moon and stars, and near the temple gates other men with great hammers were breaking up the bronze chariots that had been put there for the god of the sun.

Across on the hills he would see where men were cutting down the forest trees under which the heathen altars had been built, and dragging home the green branches for firewood, and pulling down by great ropes the tall, wooden obelisks that had been erected to heathen gods.

(Those are the things in the scene in which a boy would be most interested. Note that you have appealed to his ears as well as his eyes, noise as well as movement, and the whole scene is alive. Every one is active. Explanation of all this activity will be necessary and will ease the strain of attention, but do not make it too long.)

Finding the Book

Round the temple courts were storehouses, mostly ruined and neglected. A workman is exploring one of them. All sorts of things are there—old robes for the priests, old curtains for the temple, old vessels, basins, knives. In a corner, carefully wrapped up, he finds this parchment scroll. It has been there many years, so imagine its condition, yellow, stained, writing blurred and faded. He goes out into the light and unrolls a little of it and sees the name of God on it.

He hurries with it to Hilkiah the priest, who was in charge of the work.

Hilkiah tries to read it, but the writing is so blurred that he cannot, and he takes it to Shaphan the scribe. Picture the two men with the roll unfolded on a chest, trying to read it, each following the lines with slow forefinger. Surely they would get excited. "Stop while I read this," one would say to the other, plucking at his sleeve. "We must show this to the king," they agreed. Hurriedly they roll up the book and set out for the king's palace, only a short distance away.

(If you made a diagram of interest, during this scene the interest would decline somewhat; so you have to make the most of the appeal to curiosity and the thrill of discovery. The scene now shifts to the king's palace. This provides an opportunity for plenty of local color, especially color. The appeal of the colored picture is much stronger at this age than the appeal of the etching. Get your characters into the king's presence as soon as you can.)

Reading to the King

The king's palace with Josiah, only eighteen (emphasize his youth, it will appeal), seated on a raised platform. Long robe of white cotton edged with purple, gold girdle about his waist, high cap of purple velvet with jewels, two black slave boys behind him with long-handled feather fans, a number of soldiers and attendants about.

Hilkiah and Shaphan enter, tell story of scroll, ask permission to read it. Readers usually stood, suggest scroll too brittle for this, spread on knees while Shaphan sat cross-legged on cushion on floor. Reads in monotonous sing-song voice. Josiah leans forward, chin in his palm, greatly interested. Book was on book of Deuteronomy, read till reached curses in chapter 28. Quote verses 16-20 in full. Josiah trembled and went white. Knew people had not kept

laws of God and was afraid of these curses. He jumped to his feet and, taking hold of his robes, tore them from collar to hem, in sign of his sorrow and grief. Other men did likewise, while women burst into loud wails.

(Skip the next part of the story about consulting Huldah, the prophetess. It would be a sidetrack from the main interest. Carry on to the festival.)

The National Festival

In every village and town horsemen came with messages from the king. Blew horns and called the people together and read the king's decree ordering them to send old men and wise men to Jerusalem. The old temple had not seen such a crowd for fifty years. Place crowded with people. Courtyard full, people on walls, roofs, scaffolding. Make the scene brilliant. Let the sun shine on all the colors of their robes and headdresses. Everybody talking. People shouting to each other. If you can make them *hear* the scene, it will help them to *see* it.

There is a high platform built about a great pillar in front of temple. Trumpeters step forward and blow loud calls, and gradually noise dies dies down. Procession of officials, priests in white, soldiers in armor; then King Josiah in purple robes, gold bracelets, gold crown about high purple cap. "Long live the King! Long live King Josiah!" The king steps forward; the noise dies down. He tells the story of the finding of the book of the law and begins to read it. Everybody very quiet, so quiet you can hear sparrows twittering. He read on and on, reading all the law of the Lord until the people were trembling because they had not obeyed.

The king read the last colunm, rolled up the book, and handed it to one of the scribes. Then he raised his hand to heaven and vowed to obey the law of God and asked the people to join him. They did so. "And all his days they de-

parted not from following the Lord, the God of his fathers."

(You have come to the climax of the story with the scene at the national festival, and then you close as quickly as you can. If you wish, you can add a sentence or two telling how the covenant was fulfilled, the idols destroyed everywhere, and worship centered at Jerusalem.)

This is a good illustration of how a story is told when you have abundant material to draw upon. Nothing has been added to the story. Much has been omitted. We have tried to select those things in the story which would most strongly appeal to the boy mind.

II. THE CRAFT OF THE BIBLE STORY

(49)

VII

THE BIBLE IS TRUE

One seldom attends a conference of Sunday school teachers or listens to a discussion on lesson courses where some one does not raise the question: But is the Bible true? Sometimes the question is raised in an acute form when some person of influence and standing declares that the Old Testament has no place at all in Sunday school teaching and should be entirely left out of our curriculum. More often it is the pathetic, puzzled question of some troubled, misunderstanding soul. "We are being told that so many things in the Bible are not true and so much more will only be harmful if it is taught that we do not know what to teach. Is the Bible true?"

There are many reasons for this perplexity and unrest. In some degree we are the victims of half-understood phrases. A phrase like "the foursquare Gospel" sounds so inspired and so inspiring that we feel compelled to give it our allegiance, only to find ourselves committed to impossible positions. Or we like to feel that our faith is well founded on an infallible book; but as soon as some one suggests that the book is not altogether infallible the foundations are destroyed, and what can the righteous do? We confuse our faith with the phrases and feel that if the phrase cannot be held the faith cannot be maintained. It is surely then that we should examine the phrases we use.

What do we mean by the Bible being true? The question is not quite as simple and obvious as it appears to be. When some one asks if the creation story in Genesis is true, your answer must depend on what you understand by faith. If you mean, Is it true as a declaration of faith that the world was framed by the word of God, so that things which are

seen were not made of things which do appear, it is surely, splendidly true. If you mean, Is it true as a statement with which you can preface a textbook of geology as demonstrating the divine method of creation, it is imperfect. But it is true in fulfilling its purpose as a religious statement of how the world came to be.

There are more ways than one in which a thing may be claimed as true. You may declare that your kodak snap of Flatford Mill is more true than Constable's painting of the same scene. "The painter moved that tree at least two feet and painted another tree which was not there to secure that balance in the composition of his picture. It may be a great painting, but it is not true!" Nevertheless, Constable has got more of the atmosphere, the feeling, the meaning of the landscape on his canvas than you have on your film. His painting is more true than your snapshot.

Turner paints Venice iridescent with color; a city whose walls and waters have captured the rainbow, a dream city of jewels and pearls. Yet you cannot take his paintings for a guidebook. You put your faith in Baedeker. What then? Will you accuse Turner of being false and untrue, or will you recognize that he has learned a truth about Venice which Baedeker could never express in cold print and street maps. Each is true in so far as he has succeeded in conveying a certain side of truth, saying, "This is Venice."

The romantic and the sentimentalist say that when two people who love each other marry they become one. The stickler for truth angrily denounces the statement as a lie. He gives you inescapable proof that there are still two people in the census papers and on the hotel bills. Yet the poet who said that they were no longer two but one pronounced a deeper truth than the man who relied on census papers.

Wordsworth sings of the child:

Not in utter nakedness,
Nor in entire forgetfulness,
But in trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home.

The professor of embryology laughs it to scorn. He declares that we have no physical proof if it; that he has never seen any clouds of glory about newly born children. The statement is utterly untrue. Yet any woman who has looked into the face of her baby as he has nestled in the crook of her arm knows that Wordsworth is true and pities the scientist for the utter blindness of his soul. Once more, everything depends on what you mean by the word "true."

Francis Thompson says in awed ecstasy that his soul

Sees the traffic of Jacob's ladder,
Pitched between Heaven and Charing Cross.

If we were to ask the policeman on traffic duty to confirm the truth of that statement, he would regard you as mad or drunk. Yet it is not the policeman but the poet who has spoken the truth. And the Hebrew poet who said, "God thundereth marvelously with his voice," said something as true as the modern scientist who talks of electric discharges and storm clouds.

There is more than one language in which truth may be proclaimed, more than one accent in which a man may tell the vision as he sees it. The test of any word a man may speak, whether in the language of paint or poetry, in the tongue of music or religion or science, is: "Is it true to life as a whole? Is it true to the ways of God? Is it in harmony with the truth of God?" If so, the thing is true. "Oliver Twist" may be more true than an official biography. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" may be more true than the report of a Government Commission, and, even to-day, Mr. H. G. Wells may write more truth in "The History of Mr. Polly" than in "An Outline of Civilization." The legend of "My Lady's Jug-

gler," which Anatole France has retold in immortal prose, may be more true than the latest sensation in the morning newspaper. Was it not James Anthony Froude, himself no mean historian, who once remarked that the plays of Shakespeare were the only real history of the English people in existence, and was he not right? But what has all this to do with the question, Is the Bible true? or with the problem of teaching Bible stories to children? Just this: that we must apply to truth in the Bible the same test which we apply to truth in other spheres. The test is not narrow. It is not, Did this things actually happen to a man bearing this name living in this place at this time? But: Is the meaning and the message of this story true? Will it be a lamp unto men's feet when the way is uncertain, a light to their path when the road is strewn with pitfall and with gin?

Why is it, for instance, that people grow so disturbed about the historical accuracy of the stories of Jonah and David, yet never bother to ask whether the stories of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son are history or imagination? Surely the test of truth is the same in the one case as in the other. If the Good Samaritan may be a vehicle of the truth of God and only be "fiction," surely the story of Jonah can convey the truth of God equally well, whether it be "parable" of "history." And if you are still concerned because Jesus quoted "Jonah," surely the fact that I quote "Hamlet" does not commit me to a faith in Hamlet's historical existence in all the details of the drama.

Again, does the average child really concern himself with the problem of the historical "truth" of the stories he hears, and is the "disillusion" such a terrible things as grown-ups represent it to be? A child believes in Santa Claus, at least, in old-fashioned homes. But is the disillusion so terrible when he learns that Santa Claus was only one of the ways in which parent love had learned to be kind? Truth is, by

its very nature, progressive. The child's standard of what is true is not the man's. The beginner child believes in Jack and the Beanstalk, and in the world or four-year-olds the story is true. His father, at forty-four, listens to Arthur Machen, "We receive, each one of us, the magic bean, and if we plant it it will undoubtedly grow and become our ladder to the stars and the cloud castles." And in the world of forty-four-year olds that also is true. What then? Shall we say that no child should hear the tale of Jack and the Beanstalk when he is four years old because he will have so much to learn when he is older, or shall we believe that those who listen to the fairy story to-day will learn to plant the magic bean and climb with Arthur Machen to-morrow?

Why should we assume that no one is capable of teaching Bible stories to little children unless he is an expert in the critical theories concerning the history of Israel about which the scholars are still in such complete disagreement? Some of the critics of modern Sunday school teaching seem to suggest that you have no right to tell an Old Testament story even to a primary pupil without clearly distinguishing between the J and E portions of the story. A child is not concerned about the due proportions of carbo-hydrates and Vitamin C in its diet. While it is good that the parents should know something, the only question the child asks is, "Is it nice?" So the average child applies to your Bible story the one test he knows, "Is it interesting?" Elijah's chariot of fire presents no more problems to his mind than David's sling. Let him learn the story to-day. When he is able to appreciate the deeper truth the problem of its historical accuracy will then have assumed its proper proportion. Literal fact or romantic parable, he will find the story true? And surely there is an abundance of Old Testament stories which we may tell without introducing Elisha's bears and the

swimming axhead, which critics so persistently quote as typical Old Testament teaching.

Surely a child's mental development reproduces the development of Israel and God's growing revelation of himself to them. The God of Genesis, the wonder worker who walks in the garden in the cool of the evening is God as the primary child imagines him. The junior boy thrills to the story of the God of battles and the books of the wars of the Lord, and the long hike and trek, as he would call the wilderness wandering to-day. And if he is still the local God of Israel, the junior boy is just a member of a gang, and loyalty to the gang is one of the big things in his life and no problem. It is the intermediate boy who faces the problem of motive and the harmony of inward and outward life as the prophets faced it; while those who have sat in many classes in the school of experience will come to learn the beauty and splendor of the gospel call.

If we teach the things of which we are sure, telling our stories as stories, leaving the critical aspects to be dealt with in the years when they naturally arise, we shall find that then the spiritual meaning of the stories will keep the merely critical in its proper place. See that the truth your stories teach is a truth which grows as your scholars grow. They will come to see that, even as they themselves grew up into the knowledge of God, so in the far-off days God revealed himself in many portions and in many ways, and the revelation grew as men grew capable of receiving and understanding it. The story was always true, for the truth was a greater thing than the details of the story in which the truth came to men.

We shall achieve our purpose of growing a generation of men and women who are "Bible Christians," for, as Dr. Fosdick has eloquently said when discussing this very question:

"To believe in 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus,'

creator, character, comforter, consummator—that is to be a Bible Christian. To know moral need which our wit and will could not meet, and inward salvation from it through the power of the Spirit, and to live in undying gratitude that coverflows in service—that is to be a Bible Christian. To have found in Christ, revealer of God and ideal of man, one who calls out our admiration, captivates our love, centralizes our ambition, and crown our hopes—that is to be a Bible Christian. To be led by Him into a victorious life which rises above anxiety and fear, is made conquerer over sin, and which, laboring for the kingdom of heaven, is assured of the kingdom of heaven hereafter—that is to be a Bible Christian."

Keep that end in view, knowing that no story is "true" but those which lead the minds and hearts of little children, of youths and maidens, of men and women into such truth as this, the truth which makes men free.

VIII

THE BACKGROUND OF THE BIBLE STORY: THE LAY OF THE LAND

The Sunday school teacher of to-day has to be a specialist in at least one thing: he must know his subject. It is quite true that the real subject he has to teach is the interpretation of the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ, but if he would do that he must know how to teach the Bible story. That is a task which quickly proves itself more difficult than it sounds. If you would teach the Bible story, you must be familiar with the stages on which it was acted; you must know the geographical background, the lay of the land. You must have some acquaintance with the constantly changing story of the land, the historical background, for the story of Israel was constantly being influenced by the stories of Egypt and Babylon and Assyria. You must know the actors in the story, what manner of people they were, how they lived and fed and worked. That is the knowledge I hope to convey in the outline in these chapters.

Put Palestine in its place on the map of the world, and you are surprised to find how small it is. We have read and thought so much about it that we have thought it filled as large a place on the map as it does in our thought. Palestine is another Britain; its influence is out of all proportion to its actual size. We have been accustomed to think of going from Dan to Beersheba as being equivalent to a journey halfway around the world. Actually it is about one hundred and fifty miles, as far as from London to Nottingham. It is a narrow, little strip of country. At its widest it is barely fifty miles from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea, and at the northern end it is only a little over twenty-five miles from the Sea

of Galilee to the Bay of Acre. Put it in another way; you could put the whole of Palestine into England south of the Thames and have ample room to spare. This seems startling. The map of Palestine at the end of our Bible and on our schoolroom walls make it look a great land, with Egypt and Assyria hanging on to its borders. But even to look up the equally common map of Paul's missionary journeys reveals the fact of Palestine's comparative insignificance geographically.

Not ouly was the country itself much smaller than we have been accustomed to imagine it, but the other physical features of the land were on the same scale. In our imagination Jerusalem has the proportion of a great modern city; actually it could easily have been put inside Hyde Park, while Damascus could have been put inside the Colosseum at Rome. Much as we dislike him for saying it, Naaman the Syrian was justified in his claim that Abana and Parphar, the rivers of Damascus, were better than all the waters of Jordan. Jordan really was and is a muddy little stream, flowing in a deep valley between high banks and so narrow in places that a child can throw a stone from bank to bank. It is actually possible to stand where Moses stood and view the landscape o'er and see the whole land spread out as a gigantic relief map and to stand in the middle of Palestine and see the hills of Moab on one hand and the great "sea toward the going down of the sun," the Mediterranean, on the other hand. In a sphere as limited as that was exercised the ministry that has changed the face of the world. On that cramped stage was lived out the drama of the world's redemption.

Now put Palestine on the map of the world again and see how strangely this little pocket kingdom was isolated and yet how closely it was in touch with world history. The great empires of that day had two cradles, Egypt and Mesopotamia. Empire after empire rose and fell on the wide plains

of the Euphrates valley—Chaldea, Assyria, Babylon, Persia. Dynasty after dynasty came and passed on the throne of the Pharaohs in the valley of the Nile. Between these empires there was never-ceasing rivalry for world dominion. There was only one road from the Nile valley to the Euphrates valley. There is only one road to-day. It is the oldest road in the world. Thutmose III of Egypt led his armies up that road 1600 B.C. Allenby had to follow the same road when he fought the Turks in 1918. Follow it on your map, it comes out of the desert at Damascus, still "the gate of the desert," crosses Galilee to the pass of Esdraelon, the only break in the great chain of hills that runs from Sinai to Asia Minor, goes down the Maritime Plain to Gaza and so across the desert to Egypt. Palestine is on the edge of one of the main streets of the world, and the pageant of the world's history and commerce passes its door. Here is this little shut-in land. On one side is the sea with the Philistines always clinging to the seaboard hills. Beyond the Jordan valley are the hills of Moab guarding the desert. But the wild raiders of the Moabite hills and the Bedouin of the plains are always a peril there, as in the days of Gideon. On the south the desert isolated them and on the north the mountains.

This little land is a land of wonderful variety and a land so broken by hills that the people were not only isolated from the outer world, but in a large measure were isolated from each other. There are four strips of land, running from north to south, each having its own climate and its own characteristics.

On the west you have the maritime plain, a part of the land which Israel seldom possessed and never held for long. Washed by the sea and warmed by it, it is a land of palms and sand plains and hills clothed with vines and olives. South of Carmel it is a coast without a natural harbor. There was no invitation to voyage, no enemy could land.

The sea was a barrier and a border. Except for an occasional reference it is only in the New Testament that the sea comes into the Bible story. You have Jonah's voyage from Joppa in his endeavor to escape from his God. If you look up the position of Tarshish and Nineveh on the map, the story greatly gains in vividness.

Later you have Peter's vision at Joppa, a city notable in that day for its intensely narrow Judaism. But the fact of the acceptance of the Gentiles was fulfilled in Cæsarea, a city that had been created by Rome and was hated by all good Jews. To Cæsarea Paul comes more than once, and though only sixty miles from Jerusalem the town is virtually Rome.

Inland from the Philistine plain a sloping moorland breaks into ridges of rock that rise into a jumble of chalk and limestone hills. This is the so-called Shephelah, or lowland. As you journey down this plain, on the east lies the barrier of the Central Range, on the west lie those low hills with shallow dales, often with much open ground and wide passes leading to the sea. It is a rough land of glens and moors, brushwood and barley fields, a land with few wells and many hiding places in the cave-ridden limestone hills, just the land for such border warfare as men like Samson and David excelled in. This gives you the setting of the stories of the Philistine warfare. Here in later days, in the very caves in which David's men had hidden, Christians hid to escape the Roman persecution.

Now we climb the hills to the great central plain on which stand the cities whose names are Jewish history, Bethel and Hebron and Jerusalem. It is a land of bare uplands, where shepherds clothe themselves in sheepskins, where on the stone-roofed houses the snow will lie a foot deep. This is only a few miles from the warmer foothills, so that the

fantastic combination of a lion and snow is quite possible. This tableland, cut up by scores of ravines into a jumble of hills, the size of an average English county, contains the scenes of our Lord's birth, temptation, death, and of most of his ministry. It is mostly stony moorland where rough scrub and thorns, reënforced by a few dwarf oaks, contend with multitudes of bowlders. In the hollows are stony fields and dry torrent beds, but the glens will have olive groves and figs and a few terraces of vines. Here and there in favored places are patches of wonderful fertility, but the main impression of the land is its stones. It looks, says one traveler, as though it had been stoned to death. The Arabs have a legend that when God made the world he put all the stones that were to cover it into bags and gave them to an angel. While the angel was flying over Palestine one bag broke.

Very suddenly the land drops to the valley of the Jordan, the eastern extremity of Palestine. It is much less than twenty miles from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, a landscape that has been compared to the burnt-out embers of the moon. The Jordan valley is unique in geography in being three hundred feet below the level of the ocean. The river rises in the north of the land, near Cæsarea Philippi. It flows into the Lake of Galilee and sixty-five miles lower down flows into the Dead Sea. It is a long, narrow gorge which at Bethshan and Jericho expands into a plain. The heat makes it a forcing house, and where brooks flow into it or the spring overflows reach the flowers grow as high as your knee, the herbage as high as your shoulder. In the midst of this rank vegetation, "the pride of Jordan" is the true river bed, not clean and sparkling as our river beds, but foul with ooze and slime. Beyond this the hills of Moab close every eastward view with their long, horizontal outline, their over-

shadowing heights, their deep, purple shades, where, say the Arabs, the cold is always at home. And remember, all this variety of seaboard, moorland, plateau, torrid river bed, and bare mountain again in little more than sixty miles. Such is the land of the Bible story.

IX

THE PATRIARCHS

One of the problems which face the teller of Bible stories is the fact that, owing to the fact that the story covers so many centuries and is acted out in so many lands, the background of the story is constantly changing. The unchanging East is only half true. Many things have not changed much from Abraham's day to ours, though in our day the old order is rapidly giving place to new. Within living memory you might see water drawn from the well in water jars for the filling of a stranger's camel troughs, even as Rebekah drew water for the camels of Eliezer, and carried away in the household water jars upon the women's shoulders. To-day the ever-present gasoline tin has replaced the water jar. In still recent years pilgrims were guided across the desert by one who bore a brazier on top of a tall pole which sent back a stream of smoke, a pillar of cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire by night. To-day the Ford car is rattling out the doom of the camel.

But even in the Biblical days there were as many changes in social life as in religious thought and development, and the change was as clearly marked in the one sphere as in the other, and the background changes as the story moves from Ur to Palestine, Palestine to Egypt, Egypt to the wilderness, the wilderness to nomad life, from nomad life to city life, from Jerusalem to Chebar, from the restoration to the Roman occupation in the time of the Gospels; while the travels of St. Paul imtroduce us to a background forever changing, fascinating in its panoramic interest. In these articles we want to sketch the changing backgrounds against which the Bible story was acted out.

Ur of the Chaldees, the native city of Abraham, has pro-

vided us with one of the romances of modern exploration. Instead of being the unlettered, semi-civilized desert nomad we have usually imagined Abraham to be, he stands revealed as the product of a high civilization. Ur of the Chaldees was one of a series of city-states, strung out along the lines of the Tigris and the Euphrates, each guarded by its own deity. Ur was the city of Nannar, the moon god. It was a great port with an extensive commerce with India on the one side and Egypt on the other, and probably with lands still farther distant. The streets were probably narrow, to secure protection from the excessive heat of the sun, so that wheeled traffic would be uncommon, and beasts and men would be bearers of what we should regard as gigantic and impossible burdens. Shops would cater for the luxuries as well as for the necessities of life, but the streets would be unscavenged and exceedingly dirty. Houses were not large, and rooms were small and dimly lit, built of brick and the roofs supported by beams. The furniture consisted of couches and chairs and stools. Cooking vessels and eating dishes were of terra-cotta, while there would be jars of wood and metal for storage purposes.

Clothing was scanty. The lower classes wore only a loin cloth, the upper classes a quilted skirt, while only high officials wore tunics and pointed headdress. Writing was a common attainment among the official and priestly classes, letters being written on tablets of clay and signed with a thumb mark.

High above the city would tower the mighty temple of the god, built on the river bank, like a series of truncated pyramids placed one on top of the other, with a smoking altar as its crown. There Abraham would worship, watching the long processions of priests, bearing water from the river, climb the long flights of broad steps from platform to platform until they reached the high altar at the top. There

he himself would go and offer the sacrifices which failed to bring either satisfaction or peace and look in vain across the level plains in quest of the living God who was greater than sun or moon or stars. At last, in company with his clan, he joins one of the caravans going north to Haran.

Haran was a commercial center situated at the point where the great caravan road from Damascus joined the main highway from Nineveh to Carchemish. Here Abraham would probably come into contact for the first time with Babylonian as distinct from Assyrian worship. Haran was not only a center of moon god worship, but also of worship of Mars, the red god of war, and possibly, for the first time also, Abraham saw the custom of human sacrifice. Sir J. G. Frazer, in "The Golden Bough," tells of the practice of "the heathen of Haran, who offered to the sun, moon, and planets human victims who were chosen on the ground of their supposed resemblance to the heavenly bodies to which they were sacrificed; for example, the priests clothed in red and smeared with blood offered a red-haired, red-cheeked man to the red planet Mars, in a temple which was painted red draped with red hangings."

Still driven by the longing of his unsatisfied heart, Abraham leaves Haran and journeys west along the old caravan road to Damascus. The story grows more picturesque and appealing. For the desert life Abraham would adopt a dress very like that of the Bedouin Arab of to-day. The inner garment is a white long-sleeved "Beredan," open to the waist, clasped about the middle by a girdle of leather or cotton. Over it persons of position wear a long dressing gown like a robe, usually of bright stripes. Over this again is thrown a loose, wool coat, which is not confined by a girdle; usually of black and white stripes. Over his head he wears a knitted skullcap of camel's hair, over this a handkerchief, and to crown all the "Kouffia," a square yard of

colored cotton or silk with tassels, folded diagonally and arranged over the head and shoulders; held in position by a band in which gold, silver, and silk threads sometimes figure. Sandals are usually made of raw camel hide and are kept on the foot by thongs passing round the heel and attached to a thong between the first two toes.

Dress Abraham in some such clothes as those I have described. See him standing at the door of his great, square, black tent with its low-pitched roof, the tall, tasseled spear which is the insignia of the chief stuck in the ground at his right hand, and with his eyes looking out over the camp. Camels which have carried the baggage are kneeling in the shade of the few trees, lazily chewing the cud. Near at hand one of the slave women is swinging to and fro a goatskin of milk, churning it in this primitive fashion. Two others, seated on the ground, are steadily grinding a hand mill. A few lightly clad children are playing close by. At a little distance is the encampment of Lot. Herdsmen are leading great flocks of sheep and goats to fresh pastures that shine green and inviting in the early light, and the scene is one of busy but unhurried activity.

The tents are rectangular in shape, fashioned of black goats'-hair cloth stretched on rough poles and sufficiently high for a man to stand erect in the middle. The front is open along its entire length except the portion screened for the use of the women. Inside the tent a breast-high curtain divides the women's portion from the main part of the tent. Here, while the women sit and work they can hear all that is going on and even join in the conversation; perhaps even daring to peep over the curtain if they think they will not be detected.

When, because pasturage is exhausted or for any other reason, it is desired to move the camp, at a given signal the women hasten to pull up the tent pegs, and the houses of hair

fall. The tent coverings are rolled up; the tent poles are tied in bundles and with the household stuff and any stores of food they may have are loaded on the baggage camels. The herdsmen, with the help of the dogs, gather the sheep and cattle and lead them forward, the women mount on the baggage camels, and the men ride behind with the chief.

In ways such as these Abraham set out for Palestine, and in such a fashion Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob spent their days until the call of Joseph brought them to Egypt and introduced them to life of a very different character.

For the study of the background of this period read such books as "Local Color of the Bible," Hastings and Budden, Vol. I; "Bible History," Edersheim, Vol. I; "History of the Jewish Church," Lectures I-IV, Stanley.

X

DOWN INTO EGYPT

With the selling of Joseph into slavery a totally different scene forms the background of the Bible story. There could scarcely be a greater contrast than that between the natural, unrestricted, wandering life of the Patriarchs and the artificial, ordered civilization of Egypt; what Joseph must have felt when he first came into Egypt can scarcely be imagined. Such houses as he had seen before had been little larger than his father's tent; now he saw monstrous pylons and gigantic figures of stone, tall obelisks covered with all manner of strange inscriptions which men told him were words that men could read and hear; great houses of many stories covering much space, with flower gardens and trees set about them, overawed him by their size and magnificence. Beasts greater and more terrible than anything which had haunted his wildest dreams revealed themselves on the land or in the river, and instead of the haphazard search for pasture land to which he had been accustomed the land was guarded and cultivated. Even the change in his own condition from the pampered favorite of his father to being an almost naked slave was not greater than the change in his surroundings.

It is a truism, but none the less one which cannot be too often repeated, that Egypt is the Nile. The only part of the country which is really habitable is the strip which borders on either side that wonderful river. And for all its fertility and food and prosperity the Egypt of the Pharaohs was dependent on the Nile. Early in June, when the snows begin to melt on the tall mountains of Abyssinia, the Nile rises and overflows its banks over the level country on either side. This overflow varied greatly in depth and duration, but

usually lasted until the autumn, when it receded and left left behind a wonderfully rich deposit of fertile soil. In this soil is grown all the food supply for the year—corn and grapes, garlic and leeks, cucumbers and melons; all these Joseph would see growing, in flat gardens to which water was conveyed as far as possible by canals and channels, which were supplied by the labor of men and beasts, toiling in the blazing sun. In recent years the water supply has been regulated and preserved by the great dams which have been built.

This dependence for life itself upon the Nile helps to explain the reverence which was paid to the river by the Egyptian people. Nothing was talked about so much; nothing was watched as ceaselessly as the Nile. If the river rose high, crops would be good and people would feed well; there would be corn to waste. Should the river's rise be restricted and scanty, there would be famine and starvation. The Nile was worshiped as a god. In flood it was Osiris, the father of fruitfulness, whose image and symbol was the male ox. Its overflow was the goddess Isis, the fruitful mother, whose symbol was the cow. What was more natural, therefore, than that there should come out of the river seven well-favored kine to symbolize the seven years of plenty. Was not seven the mystic number always associated with the river? Isis herself was reputed to transform herself into seven beautiful cows.

Egypt's great flower was the lotus, the water lily of the Nile. Ladies would put a half-opened bud into their elaborately dressed hair or carry it in their hands instead of a scent bottle. The uses of papyrus, the magnificent reeds that lifted their great, flat, umbrella-like heads twelve feet or more above the waters, were almost endless. Sail cloth, mats, and baskets were woven from the stems. They were twisted into ropes, plaited into shoes, used as medicine, made into baskets

and boxes, even woven into large boats which would carry many people, while its use as paper is too well known to need more than a passing mention.

When we read of the wealth, the culture of Egyptian civilization it must be remembered that it was only made possible by the incessant, intolerable labor of the great mass of the people. Forced labor was the lot of all except the ruling classes, labor that was paid for by coarse food. Supplies of grain and dried fish were supposed to be handed out three or four times a month. In fact, wages were often only partly paid; sometimes not paid at all. Contemporary inscriptions tell of strikes and suffering. "All are driven to their work with the lash, till at last, overcome with the intolerable weight of their afflictions, they die in the midst of their labors." Such were the people whose lot Moses chose to share rather than to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

The working people lived in windowless huts of sun-dried mud or plaited reeds, bare except for a stool and an earthenware pot or two, while their clothing consisted of kilts of grass or reeds which they were able to fashion for themselves. The constant reminder to the succeeding generations that they should remember the affliction of the iron furnace of Egypt is eloquent proof of the suffering and hardship of those days.

The wealthy people and the ruling classes knew life on a very different plane. The Egyptians were wonderful builders and sculptors and attained an eminence in the luxurious arts of life which still excites the envy and admiration of the world. Their houses were set in spacious gardens. Rare shrubs in large pots of red earthenware lined the walks. Tall palms and stately trees protected them from the heat of the sun. Flower borders were set thick with scented violets,

blue lupins, and red carnations; pink convolvulus and yellow jasmine clung to the trellis work, and grapes and melons ripened quickly in the sun. Lotus grew in pools where brilliant-hued fish darted to and fro and peacocks strutted along the walls, while chained apes chattered of a lost liberty.

Beyond the courtyard, a tall veranda carried on pillars carved and painted to represent lily stems gave access to the principal living rooms. The rooms were lofty, but dim and dark, for windows had to be kept small for the sake of coolness. The walls were covered with paintings or hung with mats made of reeds dyed in different colors. The floors were covered with mats, and low benches covered with mats or cushions ran round the walls. Important visitors sat upon chairs of state made of ebony inlaid with ivory and precious woods and provided with cushions covered with leather or cloth.

In the dining room tables would be laden with dishes, fruit, and bread, and wine jars would be ranged at the back ready for use. Chairs would be provided for the guests, and meats would be served from a side table. Lotus flowers, arranged in gold and silver vases, decorated the tables, and scented water would be provided for the washing of hands before and during the meal, and to important guests garlands of flowers would be given.

There would be many other rooms in such a house, bedrooms, slaves' rooms, and kitchens and bakery well removed from the dining hall. In such a house Joseph lived as the slave of Potiphar, and in an even grander house of his own he later dwelt as ruler of Egypt and entertained his brothers.

Men wore a kind of short skirt, reaching to about the knee, sometimes fashioned into a sort of "knife-pleat" effect. A short garment covered the upper part of the body which left the right arm and shoulder exposed. Officials, of course,

wore special garments in addition, to indicate their rank and position. Sandals were worn by high officials and on state occasions, but the rank and file of the people went barefoot. Both men and women adorned themselves with bracelets, armlets, necklaces, and rings.

Pharaoh's daughter would be a dark-skinned lady with long, dark eyes and masses of black hair, fluffed up about her head and falling in series of tiny plaits about her shoulders. She would use quantities of false hair to supplement her own. Her face would be heavily painted and her eyes darkened. She would wear a long, loose dress of remarkably fine, soft linen; with an underskirt of thicker material, and, possibly, a cape over her shoulders. The nails of her fingers and her toes would be stained a reddish yellow with henna. Round her neck she would have a number of necklaces of crystal and amethyst; strings of little figures of men and shells and lizards, finely wrought in gold; and peacock-blue beetles interspersed with tiny hawks of silver. Headdresses were worn only by very high officials.

Men shaved their heads as well as their faces, partly for cleanliness, partly for coolness, but wore instead elaborate and heavy wigs and false, spade-shaped beards.

Children of the priests and the wealthy people went to school, learning to read and write the strange picture writing the Egyptians had devised and to perform calculations which were not at all easy. Some boys would go on to learn geometry and astronomy. Punishments were swift and severe. Idling was the cardinal sin. The maxim of the master was, "The ears of the young are placed on the back, and he hears when he is flogged." Games were common among both boys and girls. Pictures may still be seen of girls mounted on the backs of their companions throwing balls to one another or juggling to keep two or three balls in the air

at the same time. Girls had dolls, while boys made mechanical toys with wood and string. Swimming and dancing, too, were much practiced.

There was a military school for boys who intended to make the army their career, "The Royal Stable of Education" and two great universities. Tradition says that Moses was educated at Heliopolis.

This will help you to reconstruct the background of the stories of Joseph and Moses. For further study consult: "Local Color of the Bible," Budden and Hastings, Vol. I; "Bible History," Edersheim, Vol. I; "Joseph the Pioneer," Parkinson; "Where Moses Went to School," Duff; "Dwellers on the Nile," Budge; "A Century of Excavation in the Land of the Pharaohs," Baikie; "The Land of the Pharaohs," Manning; and Bible Dictionary articles on Egypt.

XI

ISRAEL'S FIGHTING DAYS

After the brief and bitter experience of civilized life in Egypt Israel reverted to the simple, patriarchal life of the nomad tribes to which their fathers had been accustomed. Once more they were dwellers in tents, moving from place to place in search of food for themselves and fresh pastures for their flocks. They were not entirely uninfluenced by their sojourn in Egypt. Many of them had been skilled craftsmen and had learned trades to which they had aforetime been strangers, crafts which they pursued, as they had opportunity, in the wandering life of the desert. The religion of Egypt and its ceremonies had made a deep mark upon their minds. God was no longer a being with whom a man might sit and talk in his tent door in the cool of early morning or quiet evening, and community life had begun to develop. But in the main they had returned to the background of patriarchal life.

For the geographical background of these years refer to such books as Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine" and Fosdick's "Pilgrimage to Palestine," chapter III.

With the crossing of the Jordan and the capture of Jericho Israel entered upon a new chapter in her experience, a long chapter, chequered with greatly varying experience, for the struggle for the conquest of the land lasted through all the period of the judges, through the days of Samuel and Saul, down to the days when David captured the stronghold of Jebus and finally subdued the Philistines.

The people of Israel fill so large a place in our thought and imagination that, if we do not think of Palestine as an almost empty land waiting to be possessed, at least we think of the people with curious names, Hivites and Perizzites and the

rest, as being obscure little tribes, small in number and utterly without importance. As a matter of fact, Palestine was a well-peopled land whose inhabitants were, in many cases, far superior in culture, in civilization, in military prowess to the Hebrew people. Some of them were small and obscure tribes, it is true, but who would guess, from what the Bible has to say about the Hittites that they once existed as a great empire in Asia Minor and contended on equal terms with the other two great civilizations of the ancient East, Egypt and Babylonia.

With what contempt we regarded the Philistines, when as children, we reveled in the stories of the wars of the Lord. Yet, "as a matter of fact, the Philistines were a great people, probably the last inheritors of the Minoan civilization of Crete, and some scholars even believe that we owe to them the origin of our alphabet. So powerful were they, so impressive in their influence, that theirs is the name we call the country by, for Palestine is the Greek for Philistia." It is not surprising that the conquest of the land was a long, difficult task, never more than half completed.

Here and there tribes and communities were wiped out in the merciless, bloodthirsty fashion which was characteristic of the days, but, for the most part, Israel seems to have been content to exert a more or less complete ascendancy, as David over the Jebusites, and then settled down to dwell side by side with the people of the land and rely upon the power of peaceful penetration. This was a policy whose reactions were as much religious as political. Jehovah was the tribal god of Israel; but Baal was still the local deity upon whom Palestine depended for its welfare and prosperity. This friendly intercourse and intermarriage proved a greater menace to Israel's faith and to her national life than the sword. "Having thus met them at the hearth, it was easy to meet them at the altar."

One result of all this was that there was no central government. It was like England under the Heptarchy when the country was divided into communities who each went their own way. In addition, there was always the peril of the people on the borders. The Philistines on the west and the raiding Midianites on the east were vigilant foes who were a constant menace. The fighting of those days was not so much a matter of organized campaigns and pitched battles as guerilla warfare between small forces where courage and surprise counted for more than military equipment. The Philistines were a century ahead of the Israelites in armament. Their defensive armor was a plated corselet and a round buckler with two handles, and they fought with a heavy broadsword of iron and a long spear. But in Israel "there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan; but with Saul and Jonathan his son was there found."

The foothill country which bordered the Philistine plain, the Shephelah, lent itself admirably to this type of warfare. "The prevailing scenery of the region," says Sir George Adam Smith, "is of short, steep hillsides and narrow glens, with a very few great trees, and thickly covered by brushwood and oak scrub—crags and scalps of limestone breaking through, and a rough, gray torrent bed at the bottom of each glen. . . . Caves, of course, abound—near the villages, gaping black dens for men and cattle, but up the unfrequented glens they are hidden by hanging bush, behind which you disturb the wild pigeon. Higher up you rise to moorland with rich grass if there is a spring, but otherwise heath, thorns, and rough herbs that scent the wind. . . . Altogether it is a rough, happy land, with its glens and moors, its mingled brushwood and barley fields; frequently under cultivation, but for the most part broken and thirsty, with few wells and many hiding places; just the home for strong

border men like Samson and just the theater for that guerilla warfare, varied occasionally by pitched battles, which Israel and Philistia waged with each other."

Here it is easy to reconstruct the surprise attacks of Gideon and the touch and run warfare between David and Saul and to picture the men who crept by devious ways to the secret cave of Adullam and kept watch from cunningly contrived hiding places on the soldiers of Saul who hunted in vain for David. Under such conditions life and property alike were insecure. "In the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travelers walked through byways." Houses would be small and roughly built, cultivated land was fairly common, but, especially in harvest time, the crops had to be guarded from raiders. Compare the story of Gideon as a vivid picture of social life.

The first decisive victory over the Philistines was the triumph of Samuel in the battle of Ebenezer. After this there seems to have been something like steady progress toward an ordered, common life. It did not come suddenly. Samuel's *régime* was not very extensive.

"When I used to read," says Dr. Fosdick, "that Samuel went on circuit judging Israel, from Ramah through Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah and back to Ramah again, I pictured a long journey. As a matter of fact, he was never more than fifteen miles from home."

In due time Saul the king replaces Samuel the prophet. Once more we are in peril of reading into that day the experience of our own day. Saul's little court would know nothing of pomp and circumstance. He was but the leader of a few tribes struggling desperately for their living against powerful foes, the fighting leader of a small people. The throne of Israel was no seat of ivory and gold in that day, but a couch in a small house in a wayside village or a raised seat in the shadowed gateway of a little walled town. Then

once more the Philistines triumph, and all the hope of Israel perishes on Gilboa, and the outlook would have been utterly dark but for that shepherd lad from Bethlehem whom Saul had hated with so deep a hatred, so fierce a jealousy.

For the background of this period consult: "Local Color of the Bible," Budden and Hastings, Vol. I; "Historical Geography of the Holy Land," G. A. Smith, Chaps. X and XII; "Pilgrimage to Palestine, "Fosdick, Chap. IV; "Holy Land and Bible," Geikie, Chaps. V-IX; Bible Dictionary, articles: "Philistines," "Warfare."

XII

THE KINGDOM AND THE KINGS

The establishment of David's kingdom and throne at Jerusalem and Israel's victory over her enemies round about meant the beginning of vast, far-reaching social changes in the life of the people. Movements which David inaugurated were kept in check by his early training and personal preference. David was always more of a shepherd with his heart in the green pastures, a daring outlaw pitting his wits against others than a king in love with luxury and splendor. Solomon, his son, was the typical, luxury-loving product of the Eastern harem. "Solomon inaugurated in Jerusalem," says Dr. J. E. McFadyen, "a reign of materialism, oppression, profligacy and idolatry." The court at Jerusalem modeled itself on the courts of Egypt and Assyria, and all society which was sufficiently wealthy modeled itself on the court. If the wealth was not available, robbery and oppression were short cuts to the desired goal. It must be remembered that the splendor of "Solomon in all his glory," was made possible by military conscription, forced labor, and oppressive taxation, which produced a harvest of revolution and wrecked the kingdom when Solomon was succeeded by Rehoboam. Meanwhile the patriarchal, agricultural life had been transformed into the artificial, over-civilized life of court and city.

This is reflected from many angles in the prophets of the Old Testament, who give us invaluable background material for the reconstruction of social life. Amos the herdsman comes from the bare hills of Tekoa into the fashionable religious life of Bethel, twenty miles away. Through his eyes that the desert air had sharpened, with his unaccustomed ears "we see and hear the bustle of the great festivals and fairs, the solemn assemblies, the reeking holocausts, the noise

of songs and viols, the brutish religious zeal kindling into drunkenness and lust on the very steps of the altar; the embezzlement of pledges by the priest; the covetous restlessness of the traders, their false measures, their entanglement of the poor in debt; the careless luxury of the rich, their banquets, buckets of wine, ivory couches, pretentious, preposterous music."

Or we walk with Isaiah in the streets of Jerusalem and see the women who with enticing eyes and outstretched necks walked with mincing steps and tinkling anklets along the fashionable thoroughfares, or in his company leave the city to watch the preparation and the planting of a vineyard on a southward facing hill. Micah comes from a little village on the borders of Philistia to reach at one bound a description of true religion which the world has never outgrown and of which it has never wearied.

In a later day Jeremiah travels the two and a half miles from Anathoth to Jerusalem; "a man of deep emotion and sympathy, capacious for vicarious grief and at the same time a lion for courage either to attack evil or endure contumely." In his company we see Jerusalem and Judea go through reforms full of hope and disastrous reactions full of disillusionment. He saw Jerusalem fall twice before the armies of Babylon, who left it at last a heap of ruins. Nor was the situation better in Samaria than in Jerusalem. Elijah's conflicts with Ahab and the story of Naboth's vineyard is eloquent proof of that.

This change in social life in Israel and Judah covers a period of nearly four hundred years. David set up his kingdom in Jerusalem about 1000 B.C., and Jerusalem was finally destroyed by the Babylonians and the people carried away into captivity about 587 B.C. Changes in religious life were not less revolutionary than those in social life. The old Canaanite religion with its high places and sacred groves had

never been completely stamped out; the sojourn in Egypt had produced a perilous familiarity with idols and idol worship, and under Solomon many foreign gods were introduced, partly for domestic, partly for political and commercial reasons. It was not until the days of Josiah that worship was centralized in the temple at Jerusalem, and frequently in the later years we find altars of other gods and chariots of the sun in Jerusalem, and even in the temple courts, while Moloch and Baal still contend with Jehovah for the hearts of the people; while such royal marriages as that of Ahab with Jezebel of Phœnicia weighted the scales heavily in favor of the heathen cults.

Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, was captured by Sargon of Assyria in 722 B.C. Something like 27,000 people were transported to Assyria, and Babylonian colonists were sent there in place of the deported inhabitants. Jerusalem was more easy to defend and sometimes by buying off invaders as Rehoboam bought off Shishak of Egypt, sometimes by vigorous defense and great deliverances as when Hezekiah was delivered by an outbreak of bubonic plague in the army of Sennacherib, the city endured until it was captured by the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C. Its king and court and more than 10,000 of its inhabitants were carried away captive. Over those who were left Zedekiah plotted with the Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt and rebelled, heedless of the warnings of Jeremiah. Jerusalem was once more beseiged and taken after a siege lasting a year and a half. The city was given over to the Chaldean soldiery, plundered of its treasure, and set on fire. A large number of the population, including all the best of the people, were sent into exile; only the lowest class were left to carry on the affairs of the ruined city and to cultivate the wasted land. Nebuchadnezzar appointed a Jew, named Gedaliah, to be governor, but he was murdered soon after by one of his own

countrymen, and in 587 B.C. Jewish rule in Jerusalem came to an end.

Warfare in these days had a character of its own. There does not appear to have been anything kin to a standing army in Israel until the reign of David, who made his band of followers during his exile the kernel of a much more complete and extensive military organization. He also enlisted considerable numbers of foreign mercenaries. It is doubtful whether Israel had any mounted troops before the days of Solomon, who is credited with a force of 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen. Probably the armies of Israel and Judah were modeled on that of Solomon till the end of the monarchies, with their main reliance on infantry.

In the early days soldiers were armed with a spear with a bronze or an iron head and a short, two-edged sword of iron carried in a sheath in the girdle. Bows were of reed, or of tough, pliable wood. The bowstring was of ox gut, and the arrows were light reeds tipped with metal. Slings were made of long, narrow strips of leather, cupped in the middle to receive the stone, and slingers became amazingly accurate in their aim. At first armor was suspect and little used, but from the later days of David onward the army was probably divided into the lightly armed, whose weapons would be spear, bow, sling, sword, and small shield; and the heavily armed, who would carry a bronze shield and wear helmets of bronze.

The Hebrews first learned the use of the battering ram from the Assyrians. Attacking forces advanced under cover of the arrows of the bowmen and either immediately attempted to scale the walls or else posted themselves under cover of hide shelters and attempted to undermine the walls or to pull them down with long hooks or to batter them down with rams. Attempts would be made to set the city on fire, especially to burn down the gates. Later six-wheeled towers

were employed. They were covered with rawhide as a protection from fire, archers were carried on the upper stories and powerful battering rams on the lower. The aim of the defenders was to counteract the efforts of the besiegers to scale or breach the walls. Bags of chaff and other fenders were let down from the battlements to render the battering rams ineffective, stones were hurled from the battlements to overturn ladders and break off the heads of the rams. The enemies' engines of war were undermined or set on fire, and boiling oil was poured on the attackers. No mercy was shown and none was expected. And in most ways of attack and defense there was little change from the time of Solomon to the invention of gunpowder in the Middle Ages.

In spite of all, many sieges were very long. The siege of Samaria lasted more than two years. Much depended, not only on the strength of the defense, but on the supplies of food and water and on the freedom from or the outbreak of diseases. For the fullest account of what siege meant to a city see 2 Kings 6: 25ff.

For literature consult: "Local Color of the Bible," Budden and Hastings, Vol. II; "Pilgrimage to Palestine," Fosdick, Chaps' V, VII; "History of the Jewish Church," Stanley, Lectures XXVI-XL; Bible Dictionary, articles, "Architecture," "Arms," "Siege," "War," "Weapons."

XIII

THE EXILE AND RESTORATION

THERE is no doubt but that the Jews who were carried away captive to Babylon anticipated a quick reversal of nation fortunes and a speedy return. Jeremiah, and later Ezekiel, warned them in vain of the folly of their hopes. They despised the remnant of the people who had been left behind in Jerusalem and regarded themselves as the true Israel. They had been compelled to leave hurriedly, either abandoning their houses and lands or selling them at give-away prices to those who were being allowed to remain, and the memory of their losses and of the others' gains was bitter indeed. The second destruction of the city and the passing of the years made them reconcile themselves at last to the new conditions, and they endeavored to make the best of the circumstances in which they found themselves.

They were settled in a series of colonies on the outskirts of Babylon, of which the principal was Chebar, where the prophet Ezekiel was prominent among the people. At first they must have felt overawed and overwhelmed by the might and splendor of the city. Reports of its area vary considerably, but according to Herodotus each of the walls that inclosed the city area was fourteen miles long, pierced by a hundred gates of bronze and guarded by many towers. The idea appears to have been to inclose an area sufficient not only for dwellings, but for growing a food supply in case of siege. Around the city was a defensive canal, and the top of the wall resembled a street, with houses on either side and space betwen for four-horse chariots to pass or turn. The temple of Belus was a tower with seven stages with an outside stairway leading from stage to stage, surmounted by a spacious chapel. The houses were three or four stories high,

the houses of the wealthier people being faced with colored bricks, enameled in various designs. The palace of Nebuchadnezzar was adorned with gold, silver, precious stones, and every token of magnificence and was as "high as the wooded hills." Round it were the famous hanging gardens, laid out on slopes and continued above on vaulted brickwork, with earth enough to accommodate trees of great size. It is easy to understand how the people of Jerusalem would be amazed by its size and overawed by its splendor after their own little city of Jerusalem. There is something almost pathetic in their heart cry, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem."

The fifty years of exile passed away at last. Babylon fell to the conquering Medes and Persians, and Cyrus reigned on the throne of Nebuchadnezzar. One of his first acts was to set about the restoration of the captive peoples to their own lands; and, because the gods of the peoples were shamed and insulted at being torn from their native places, they also had to share in the restoration. But by this time only a small minority of the people were anxious to return to Palestine. Many of them had intermarried with the Babylonians and had formed new ties and made new homes they had grown to love. Many were utterly indifferent to and unmoved by an appeal that was, after all, largely based on religious sentiment. Many more had found opportunities of wealth in the widely spread trade and commerce of the great world state such as they had never dreamed of among the lonely hills of their own highland home. Quite recently the archives of a great Babylonian bank have been dug up from the desert sand, and, as might be anticipated, there is an abundance of Jewish names.

So the people who joined the first return under Sheshbazzar and Zerubabel in 538 B.C. were comparatively few. The eight-hundred-mile journey must have meant considerable hardship. There is no record of how long it lasted, but

the return under Ezra, which was much better equipped, meant a journey of four months. Only disappointment and difficulty faced them when they did return. The land of whose delight they had dreamed and of whose splendor they had sung was little better than a wilderness. They settled in the land which had been given them in the area round about Jerusalem; but the Edomites still dwelt in the Southern half of Judea. After fifty years of undisturbed possession, they naturally grudged the returning exiles even the northern half of the land. There was conflict, too, with the native-born Jews, the descendants of those who had been left behind at the captivity. They had acquired rights and privileges which they were not anxious to surrender and ways of living and worship with which they resented the interference of men whom they regarded as strangers and foreigners, whatever they might carry from the king. The conflict was so acute and the difficulties were so great that the enthusiasm and zeal of the returned exiles soon spent itself, and they settled down into apathetic despair. The temple remained little better than a desolation, the foxes and the jackals ran over the ruins of the broken wall, the people made themselves homes amid the wreckage of the city and wrested a miserable livelihood from the thorn-filled fields and neglected vineyards.

Such was the state of affairs till Ezra led the second return some nineteen or twenty years later, bringing an additional 5,000 to 6,000 people. Under the inspiration of Haggai and Zechariah a new movement was started and a beginning was made with the building of the temple and the due keeping of the law which had been preserved in Babylon. But this movement, too, seems to have spent itself quickly, and not until the days of Nehemiah was anything done of lasting worth. Wealthy families lived only for themselves, while the poor were in actual distress. The temple, even now, was unpretentious and but badly supported. The Samaritans

gloried in an attitude of open enmity. But an ordered commercial life had been developed, with each trade occupying a quarter of its own.

At last Nehemiah comes upon the scene. He was cupbearer to the king in Babylon, a position almost kin to that of Minister in Attendance and personal adviser. Distressed at the news of the state of Jerusalem brought him by his brother, Nehemiah gets himself appointed governor of the district of Judea and empowered to build the fortifications of Jerusalem and to obtain the supplies necessary from the royal storehouses. Nehemiah traveled swiftly and set to work with such amazing zeal that he inspired every one else with his own untiring energy. Undaunted by difficulties, undismayed by opposition, he succeeded in getting the walls built and the gates set up within fifty-two days. Meanwhile he had set himself by precept and example to bring about a better state of social relationships and in coöperation with Ezra to regulate the temple services and order religious life. By his measures of safety he increased the population by attracting people from the neighboring country and set Jerusalem once more on the way to prosperity. Of all that Nehemiah did during the rest of the twelve years he spent in Jerusalem there is no record. But we find him returning to Babylon and then coming back to Jerusalem for a second term of office, and after that the records are silent.

For the literature of this period consult any commentaries on Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Bible Dictionary articles on these books and on "Captivity," "Babylon," etc.

XIV

A SPRINGTIME WALK IN GALILEE

Would you like to come out for a walk some spring morning in Galilee? The seasons are not quite like ours, although ours are a little difficult to distinguish sometimes. Palestine has only two seasons, the wet and the dry. The wet season begins about the end of October with what the Bible calls the "early" or the "former" rains. This is the farmer's opportunity to plow his land with his single-handed plow, which makes a furrow about six inches deep, and to sow some of his seeds. There is usually a slight rainfall during December, increasing in January and culminating in the heavy "latter" rains of March and April. For the next six months there is continuous dry weather with scorching heat; only relieved by the mists of early morning and the heavy dews of evening; so that God promises his people, "I will be as the dew upon Israel."

In the hot days that first follow this season of incessant rain growth is rapid. This is specially marked in seeds which have been dropped in places where there is only a thin layer of earth over the bed-rock beneath. "It springs up because it has no deepness of earth, and when the sun is up it withereth away." Now is the time when the flowers appear upon the earth; and in few places do they blossom in such beauty, such variety, such abundance as in Galilee. Says Dr. Fosdick: "Anemone, poppy, cyclamen, phlox, ranunculus, lupine, oleander—scores of varieties in such brilliance and profusion as I never saw elsewhere fill the fields of Palestine from Moab to the Lebanons. In well-watered places where soil and rain have happily conspired, their brilliant colors, framed in gray rocks and olive green branches, make a blend so perfectly commingled by nature that the result is beautiful

to the point of tears. All who live in Palestine, however, and all who visit here long enough to know, agree that the wild flowers are loveliest in Galilee."

We will revel in this wealth of beauty while we may. It will not last very long. "The grass withereth and the flower fadeth" was specially true of Palestine, and to-morrow the grass that has dried in the sun and withered in the wind will be "cut down and cast into the oven." But for the present it does indeed outshine Solomon in all his glory.

Walking through a world so full of fresh beauty, we climb a high hill and look out over a broken landscape with gray rock mountains, stony moors, bare sweep of grazing lands, scattered forests and fertile valleys and the pear-shaped blue lake of Galilee, sleeping in the sunlight amid the green, enfolding hills.

There are no fields, as we understand the term; *i. e.*, there are no patches of land inclosed by hedges or fenced by ditches. The land surrounding each village lies as an unbroken stretch, as open common on which each man might have his allotment. The parable of the sower gives you a vividly true picture; the footpath that runs alongside or across the field, beaten hard by the constant passing of men and animals; the old thorn patch that has never been properly "stocked up," where already in the hot sun the old roots are pushing up vigorous new growth, the place where the soil is thin and the gray rock projects above the soil; all these compete with the "good ground," where the crops are likely to be abundant. Already the sower is striding to and fro, scattering the seed with a careful hand while the birds dip and wheel about his head.

Yonder on the hillside is the village sheepfold, a rough inclosure of four stone walls reënforced with thorns and brambles. All the shepherds for some distance round have folded their flocks in it during the night, for there are still

hyenas and jackals to be watched for, and occasionally even bears may be met. The fold has no door. Its only entrance is a narrow opening in the wall. Here the shepherd sleeps at night, quite blocking up the doorway with his bulky form so that he is, in literal truth, "the door of the sheep" (John 10: 8). Now he stands in the door of the fold and calls his own sheep by name, one by one, and leads them out to pasture. His call is very simple and appears to be capable of easy imitation; but, copy it as closely as you please, they will not follow you; they know not the voice of strangers. Now he goes off in search of green pastures and waters of rest, leading his sheep, not driving them, and the flock follows in two parallel columns; the sheep, ring-streaked, speckled, and white, in one; the black goats in another.

Look at the shepherd as he comes near with those fierce dogs at his heels who are capable of tackling a wolf, should the emergency arise. See that heavy rod, or club, which swings from his girdle, a massive cudgel of oak, about two feet long, with many nails driven into it to give weight and severity to a blow, and a strap attached to it to secure his grasp. He has his long staff in his right hand as he trudges along, and his treasured sling hangs from his belt. It is made of goats' hair with a rounded diamond-shaped pad in the middle, into which the stone was pressed and held as in a bag. He uses it, not only as a weapon, but also to drop a stone near any sheep that is lagging too far behind, to rouse it to a sense of its loneliness and danger.

These are the most conspicuous living figures in the landscape, except a group of women going down to the village well yonder with their water jars upon their shoulders, as women have done from Abraham's day to ours, when the familiar water jar is being discarded in favor of petrol tins.

Some of the plants and trees are worth looking at more closely. We can do so now with comparative comfort. In

a few weeks when the grass and flowers will have withered to a dull brown, insect and reptile life, and scorpions in particular, will be too plentiful for human comfort. Mustard, to which Jesus alluded so often, is growing close at hand with its brilliant yellow flower, more golden than gold. It is much the same plant as English mustard, but, especially in the richer soils of the Jordan valley, grows to an amazing height. Dr. W. M. Thomson says that in the Plain of Acre he has seen it as tall as a horse and its rider.

The vine, the olive, and the fig are the typical trees of the country. In many places on the steep hillsides we can see where vineyards have been prepared. The steep hills have been terraced, the loose stones gathered from the soil have been used for dry walls, to protect the vineyard from foxes, jackals, and wild pigs as well as from robbers. The land has been carefully cleaned from weeds and thistles, trenches cut for the water supply, a watch tower built, and two wine presses five or six feet square and three feet deep cut in the solid rock. There will be fairly constant work of one kind or another in the vineyard from now until October, when the grapes will be ripe and the hills be musical with the hand clapping and singing of those who tread the winepresses.

The olive tree flourishes in a rock land like Palestine, literally, it appears to draw its oil out of the flinty rock. (Deut. 32: 13.) It is of very slow growth. It bears no berries until its seventh year, and its crop is not worth much till its fifteenth year. But afterwards it will bear an abundance of fruit right on to extreme old age. So long as there is a fragment remaining, though it looks dry as a post, it will continue to yield its load of oily berries and, if long neglected, will revive as soon as the land is dug and plowed and yield its fruit for twenty generations. So you can understand why the men of Galilee reverence the olive tree so greatly.

Figs are of two kinds. There is the fig mulberry, very like

the English oak in appearance, which is commonly called the sycamore in the Bible. Its fruit is not very pleasant eating, but it is almost the only timber tree of any size native to the country. So it was very highly regarded. David provided special overseers to protect its cultivation, and in our own day the Turkish government regarded it as a royal tree and imposed a special tax upon it.

The ordinary fig tree is the most common of all the fruit-bearing trees in the landscape, and in such a climate all men were grateful for its shade. To "sit every man under his own vine and fig tree" is the ideal picture of security and peace. Already, in early spring, the tips of the twigs are expanding into the green, unripe figs, which will fall when they are about the size of cherries and be gathered for food. Some will develop and ripen in June and will be known as "firstripe" figs. These will grow on the old wood. But the best figs will be produced on the new wood in August and provide a staple article of diet for most families.

Such are some of the most conspicuous features in a Galilee landscape in spring. In the next chapter we will leave the country and walk in the town.

XV

LET US WALK IN THE TOWN

No one traveled alone in Biblical times, if he could avoid it, because of the perils of the way; so we prepare to join a caravan that is setting out for the distant city. We make the necessary preparations that we may have food for the journey by wrapping up a few thin loaves in bundles with ripe, black olives, cheese, boiled eggs, or figs; or possibly, if we are near a seaside or lakeside town, two or three dried fish. This we carry in the leather bag which Jesus calls a scrip, or wallet, or basket. It is useless to take more than enough for the day because the thin bread will dry up and crumble into small pieces. It is equally necessary that we take an ample supply of water.

Thanks to the Romans, in these New Testament days, there are well paved, clearly marked roads, and the long caravan of camels, in single file, led by a pattering donkey, stretches out for a quarter of a mile or more. We press on to reach the end of our journey, and soon we are passing through the double gate of the town. It has a watchtower above it for the watchman who, in less peaceful days, had to be on the alert to give the alarm should enemies come. Here, in the shade of the deep gateway, the elders of the city gather and deliver judgment in disputes and administer justice to those who break the law. There is a case in progress as we pass through, and we catch a word here and there as the two parties protest their own integrity and proclaim the lying wickednes of their opponents.

There is nothing about the streets to suggest the order, the decency, the provision for traffic which characterize the streets of modern towns. The streets are so narrow that there is only room for two or three people to walk abreast

in most of them. Even the main street through which we are passing to reach the market place is so narrow that two laden camels can scarcely pass. The houses present blank walls to us, with here and there lumbering overhanging windows borne on timbers gnarled and stained with age, with mysterious lattices tightly closed. Doorways are bolted and barred, except here and there where, at a larger house with a courtyard, there is a porter on duty. The streets are narrow, not merely to economize land, but principally for coolness, that people may not be exposed to the heat of the sun. Wheeled traffic is impossible, for, even were the streets wide enough, the surface is too bad. A walk here at night must be full of peril; and unles one carries a lamp, a broken leg or a sprained ankle is very probable. It is easy to understand the Psalmist's praise, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

All the refuse from the houses is cast into the streets, and there are no scavengers except the wild dogs, for no one here keeps a dog as a domestic pet, except, maybe, an occasional puppy.

We come now to the shopping quarter. Veiled women and turbaned men wearing long striped and colored robes are jostled by the pannier-carrying donkeys and our heavily laden camels. The shops are mere holes in the walls protected by gaudily striped awnings. In most cases shop and factory are one. Here you may see the goldsmith making a tinkling noise with his clever little hammer as he fashions an earring or a bracelet for a lady who waits impatiently for him to finish it. A few steps farther on your attention is caught by the hissing of the long blowpipe of the silversmith as "the refiner and purifier of silver" crouches beside his fire, keeping a watchful eye on the silverware displayed about him. The pastry cook tempts you with gaudily colored, curiously fashioned sweetmeats, while his neighbor drops the wet clay

with a loud smack upon his potter's wheel and adds one more to the mass of water jars about him. From somewhere near at hand comes the clash of the weaver's shuttle and the thud of the heavy loom. The silk seller calls us to admire his wares as he sits cross-legged in his dim shop, and the wine vender points to his buffalo skins full of wine, red as roses or yellow as topaz. And men and women bargain and haggle with truly Eastern persistence and patience.

Other venders are mingling with the slow-moving traffic of the streets. There goes the water seller, jar upon his shoulder, brass drinking cup in hand, calling, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," competing with the sherbet seller's chant of "Sherbet, my uncles, sherbet cooled with snow." Here a blind beggar feels his way along with tapping stick, heedless of the way men push and jostle him, pleading for alms in the name of God. No one heeds him but a priest in white-fringed robe and blue, horned bonnet, who dropped a small coin into the beggar's hand that was like a dirty claw and then went on his way proud of the blessings the beggar showered upon his head.

We have been so absorbed in looking at the street that we have reached the inn before we realized it. We pass in through the wide gate to find ourselves in a great courtyard. On all four sides there are arched chambers, open in front for the animals; some few have wooden screens in front for women or more important guests. But most travelers prefer to sleep in the open arches beside their beasts and their merchandise. All things considered, it is the safest place. The camels kneel down in the open, central space, and when we have seen them fed and watered and relieved of their burdens we are free to wander a little in the town. Charges here are very moderate, and the "twopence," given by the Good Samaritan to the innkeeper at Jericho, two days' wages for an ordinary man, would be a sufficient payment, espe-

cially if, as some one has suggested, he was a commercial traveler, who would soon be round again on his next journey.

There are only two types of houses in the town. The rich man's house is the more rare and the more attractive; so we will visit it first. The porter admits us to the passage that leads into the inner court round which the house is built and on which all the rooms open. It has a fountain in the middle and three or four tall, green trees for shade and coolnes. We can scarcely see when we step out of the bright sunlight into the low, broad rooms, for here in the East rooms are not built to trap sunlight, but to keep it out. The walls and the ceiling are paneled, and a few guns and swords hang on them as ornaments, but for the most part there is the coolness of bare spaces. The house is noteworthy for the possession of an upper floor reached by a wide flight of steps leading to a veranda. The principal of these rooms is over the gateway and is the special domain of the master of the house. There is little furniture in any of the rooms, and what there is is mainly rugs and costly carpets with an occasional chair or chest and a cushioned divan running round two or three sides of the room. If you penetrated into the women's quarters you would find metal mirrors, paint pots, jewel cases, and the like. For the contents of a fashionable lady's wardrobe see Isaiah 3: 18-23.

The houses of the common people are very different. Four thick walls of mud and rough-hewn stone, with an opening for a door and perhaps another for a window, are all the Jewish peasant requires for a home, walls that may be washed away in a flood or which a thief may easily dig through. The floor is of hard beaten earth, and a few vessels for corn and oil, a few cooking implements, a table and a chair or two, with perhaps a gayly painted chest to hold the family's bedding during the day, completes the furniture.

The stable is part of the living room, and the part as-

signed to the goat, or the ass, or the little red ox is only separated from the rest by a raised step with the manger as a barrier between the two. In such a manger, filled with crushed straw and barley bedding, many a new-born infant in Palestine is laid to-day, wrapped round and round with the long "swaddling" bandage of linen or cotton.

The roof is flat and made of rough beams overlaid with a mixture of brushwood, reeds, and mud, very easily removed, it is true, but only with considerable discomfort to those sitting below it. There is a hearthstone in the center of the floor on which the family cooking is done on a fire of thorns, grass, and dung, the smoke escaping as best it may by door and window space. At night the inmates sleep with their feet toward this central hearth. Their "beds" are merely thin rugs or mattresses easily rolled up, and no one "undresses" to go to bed. They simply divest themselves of their outer cloaks and use them as a covering. So it is literally true that the poor man of the house will reply, "Trouble me not, my children are with me in bed." In the houses belonging to the better type of artisan there would probably be a separate stable and a cushioned divan against the wall for sleeping. And now it is time we were getting back to our inn. "Good night, everybody!"

For literature, any of the standard Lives of Christ may be consulted; "Local Color of the Bible," Budden and Hastings, Vol. III; "Pilgrimage to Palestine," Fosdick, Chaps. VIII-X; "Historical Geography of the Holy Land," G. A. Smith. Such semi-fictional books as "Ben-Hur," Wallace, "By an Unknown Disciple," are very helpful in supplying an abundance of material in popular form, and, of course, the Bible Dictionary articles on domestic subjects and on such questions as "Travel" and "Houses."

XVI

TOURING WITH ST. PAUL

It is an altogether impossible task to convey in any adequate fashion the constantly changing background of St. Paul's life. "Paul traveled," says Dr. Glover, "like a modern commercial traveler, who forgets how many times he has crossed the Atlantic; he has the habit and hardly thinks about it." On the other hand, of course, there were few regular sailings by sea, little or no facilities for public transport by road, and none of the conveniences which combine to make modern travel a pleasant luxury.

It is probable that Paul was a traveler from his youth up. At Tarsus he would attend the Jewish school attached to the synagogue there, but his faith would debar him from attendance at the well-organized and equipped universities which Rome provided for the education of her younger citizens. Tarsus, in particular, was world famous as a seat of philosophy. Students flocked to it from all over the world, and it was acclaimed as superior to both Athens and Alexandria.

Bred in a university atmosphere, at about fifteen years of age Paul would leave Tarsus for the Rabbinical College, known as the "House of Interpretation," at Jerusalem. Here he was a pupil of the famous Rabbi Gamaliel, of whom it was said after his death, "From the day when Rabban Gamaliel the elder died, the glory of the law ceased, and purity and abstinence died." There is good reason for the suggestion sometimes made that Stephen, the first Christian martyr, and Luke, Paul's beloved physician, were fellow students with him in the school of Gamaliel at this time.

In common with every other Jewish boy, Paul would learn a trade, and his birth in Tarsus determined the trade of his

choice. The staple industry of the city was the weaving of the hair of the Cilician goats into tent cloths, ropes, and garments. This would, in all probability, involve a considerable amount of traveling, both for the purchase of the raw material and for the sale of the finished article of his trade. So that, from early youth, Paul would be familiar with modes of travel and trade routes and acquire a knowledge of many cities, which was an invaluable training for the service to which afterwards he should be called.

Paul must have been nearly fifty years of age when he set out with Barnabas on his first missionary tour and as Dean Farrar says, with characteristic vividness of phrase:

"Had he foreseen the scourgings, the flagellations, the stonings, the shipwrecks, the incessant toilings on foot along intolerable and dangerous roads, the dangers from swollen rivers and rushing watercourses, the dangers from mountain brigands, the dangers from Jews, from Gentiles, from false Christians in city and wilderness and sea—the frantic crowds that nearly tore him to pieces, the weary nights, the chill, naked, thirsty, famine-stricken days, the incessant, wearing responsibility, the chronic disease and weakness—all the outrages, all the insults, all the agitating bursts of indignation against those who put stumblingblocks in the paths of the weak, the severe imprisonments, the incessant death, and all ended by desertion, failure, loneliness, chains, condemnation, the chilly dungeon, the nameless martyrdom—had he foreseen all this, could he have borne it?"

But that is what touring really did mean for Paul and for those who, at one time and another, journeyed with him and shared the suffering and affliction which appeared to wait for him in every place. Had it not been for his friends, and what a host of friends he had, the burden would have been intolerable. What friends Aquila and Priscilla were to him! What devotion Doctor Luke showed him! What hero wor-

ship he won from Timothy! How Barnabas loved him, and with what reverence John Mark learned to look up at him.

In the good providence of God Paul was a Roman citizen. What that meant to him in his travels can scarcely be calculated. But for Rome Paul's missionary journeys and the consequent spread of the gospel would have been impossible. From the great golden pillar in the Forum at Rome well paved, wonderfully engineered roads ran to the farthest points of the empire. Posts ran along them with remarkable regularity and accuracy. If facilities for public conveyance were lacking, opportunities for private traveling were abundant. "Provincials grew into the habit of making pilgrimages to the empire city, Romans sent their sons to Greece for 'finishing' education, and 'the grand tour,' Greece, Egypt, Italy, and sometimes Gaul, was not uncommon. All this was a new and wonderful experience to people who had not been accustomed to make or repair roads unless some very great personage was traveling.

Facilities for travel by sea were equally wonderful. Rome had cleared the whole of the Mediterranean of the pirates who had infested and terrorized it and made it as safe as the Atlantic is to-day. Here is a contemporary account of an Alexandrian corn ship, such as that in which Paul voyaged and in which he was shipwrecked at Malta.

"The carpenter said it was 180 feet long and 45 feet wide and from the deck down to the pump at the bottom of the hold was 45½! And for the rest, what a mast it was and what a yard it carried! And with what a cable it was sustained! And how gracefully the stern was rounded off and was surmounted with a golden goose (the sign of a corn ship)! . . . And the multitude of sailors one might compare to a little army, and it was said to carry corn enough to suffice for a year's consumption for all Attica, and this unwieldy bulk was all managed by that shriveled old gentleman

with a bald pate, who sat at the helm twisting about with a bit of a handle those two monstrous paddles, one on each side, which serve as rudders."

The size of these ships was from five hundred to a thousand tons, and they were capable of a speed of about seven miles an hour in a favorable wind. The strain on the hull of the great sail and the single mast was so great that under-girders were used to "bandage" the ship, to use Luke's medical word, a coarse network of very strong ropes which were slipped under and bound round the hull of the vessel. In rough weather the deck was protected by tall screens of wicker-work fastened to the bulwarks, and a small boat was usually towed behind.

Such were the conditions under which Paul made his many journeys, for obviously only a few of them are recorded in the book of the Acts. For the background of the various cities which he visited and in which he labored, see the articles on these cities in any good Bible Dictionary or consult "Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen" and the "Cities of St. Paul," by Sir W. M. Ramsay. For Paul's life in general, consult any of the standard lives. Farrar is still invaluable for vivid description, David Smith, Stalker, "Paul of Tarsus," Glover, and a fine novel in whc ha good deal of fiction is intertwined with much accurate description, "Brother Saul," by Donn Byrne. For young people, a fine reconstruction of the picturesque and adventurous side of Paul's life, Basil Mathews' "Paul the Dauntless," is unsurpassed and unapproached. Paterson Smyth's "Story of Paul's Life" and letters is also very helpful for the events with which it deals.

III. SOME STORIES TO TELL

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XVII

ABRAM: THE MAN OF THE QUESTING HEART

"The Bible Story gives results. God speaks, and man obeys. No account is taken of a process of thought in the man's mind, but we cannot conceive of a process being absent. Abram must have had a spiritual conflict such as happens to all who feel the inward struggle to strike out for spiritual independence." An attempt is made to suggest this struggle. The story is for intermediates and seniors who will be able to appreciate what such a struggle means. There are four scenes in the story.

I. Abram's Questing Heart. In this scene you have to weave in the material and physical background of the story.

II. The Interview with the Priest. This is based on an old legend in the Koran.

III. The Talk with Terah.

IV. The Quest.

This story is inserted as a method of dealing with a lesson where the story material lacks incident.

DIM and ghostly in the soft, blue starlight rose the temple of Nannar, the Moon god, in Ur of the Chaldees. Up and up it soared, massive tier piled on massive tier, with flights of wide steps leading from one stage to another, with white priests dotted upon them here and there, moving toward the topmost platform, where a thin spiral of smoke still rose from the golden altar. Clustered about its feet was the sleeping city over which Nannar kept watch. Tall houses stood sentinel in the midst of wide gardens, great public buildings looked mountainous in the quiet starlight, and far and near were the huddled mud huts in which lived the unnumbered, unregarded slaves. From the wharves that skirted the land-locked harbor rose the slim masts of a hundred ships, burdened with their wide, heavy yards. Somewhere on the deck of one of those ships, which had journeyed from a far land, a sailor, lonely and heartsick, played sadly on some strange instrument of music and sang songs that plucked at the heartstrings and unstopped the fount of quiet tears.

No one heeded his song in the night. It were the same as though he had been dumb. Some man to whom sleep would have been a peace and a forgetting cursed the singer for disturbing his rest, but that was all. Nannar, the Moon god, whose praises all men sang, was as far off as the stars, as cold as the moon, as indifferent as the east wind to the longing of a heartsick sailor as to the torn body of a beaten slave.

So one man felt that night in Ur who sat by the window space in the wide room of a great house and watched the deep blue of midnight pale a little as it heralded the rising of the moon. His heart was burdened with a need which no sacrifice ever satisfied; which no offering or devotion ever seemed to meet. His whole soul yearned for peace, but Nannar paid no heed to his petitions, or, if the god heeded, he was powerless to help or even answer him. Surely his sacrifice and offering were altogether vain; his worship and devotion were an empty mockery of reality.

Long blasts blown on trumpets silver as the moon herself roused Abram from his brooding reverie. They sounded like a challenge to his faith and a rebuke to his despondency. He raised his head and listened for a moment, then shook it despairingly. So many times he had listened to that call, responded to that challenge, and it had always been in vain. He watched the long procession of gorgeously robed priests issue from the temple and go down toward the river that they might fetch the sacred water which must be poured out before the god to greet her rising again from the darkness of death. In a little while they returned, followed by a great company of worshipers, men whose needs were as varied as their faces. At this time of the feast of the new moon men's hopes rose high and great enterprsies could be undertaken.

Good causes grew better and prospered as the moon waxed

greater, and Nannar increased in power to help his worshipers as the moon grew full. So every man with a secret hope, or a deep need, or facing some high adventure, or called to set out an some perilous journey, bowed in the house of Nannar and sought the blessing and the favor of the god.

The music of a song of invocation reached the ears of Abram where he sat in his window, and half unconsciously he fitted the words to the music and murmured them reverently.

> Firstborn, omnipotent, whose heart is immensity and there is none who may discover it.
> Look with favour on thy temple.
> Look with favour on Ur thy city.
> Let the freeborn man ask rest of thee, O Lord.
> Let the spirits of heaven and earth ask rest of thee, O Lord.*

But the rest he sought still eluded him. It may be that he was different from other men, but he needed more than they appeared to need to satisfy his spirit's strange, deep longing. He needed some God who was not inconstant as the moon, who did not set like the sun, who was not cold and distant like the stars; but a God with whom a man could talk as he talked with his friends.

Abram was not alone in Ur in his soul hunger and his deep need. Even in the temple of Nannar there were great-souled, high-thinking men to whom all the ceremonies seemed empty and all the sacrifices vain. They kept on with litany and ritual, sacrifice and offering because they knew no other way, but their hearts were empty, and their souls knew no peace. Of such was Ishtar, who stood high in the hierarchy of the priests and had grown withered and old in the service of the god. The long, elaborate ceremony of the feast of the new moon had drawn to its dramatic, satisfying close. The people had gone when Ishtar came through the vaulted

* From "Hymn to the Moon," translated by Sayce.

temple where the air was still heavily sweet with incense, and at the door he found Abram waiting for him. The heart of the priest rejoiced when he recognized the voice, for he greatly loved this sincere, earnest young chieftain who always seemed what Ishtar would have wished his son to be, if he had had one.

They walked together down toward the slow-flowing river in the silent communion of perfect understanding. At last the younger man opened his heart.

"My father, thou hast often guided me with thy counsel. In the midst of stormy seas thou hast come to my assistance and thou hast held my hand."

"Why are we set near together except that we may help each other?" Ishtar replied, sympathetically. "Say on, my son."

So Abram told the priest all that was in his heart, all his longing for a God nigh at hand, all his yearning for some one who would understand and care, to whom he could go at all times. The words came slowly and unreadily. Abram was seeking to express things so deep that he had scarcely dared to acknowledge them even to himself; but to-night some greater power than his own will was making confidence possible.

"And there have been hours," he added, "high and very rare, when it has been as though, even in the temple of Nannar, a great invisible Presence has come to me and spoken to me, some one greater far than Nannar, and has told me of a far land where he may be found."

Ishtar was long before he replied, and when he did so his voice was weary, as the voice of one who knows the long number of his days: "I also have felt—but one grows content, or, perhaps, one grows afraid. I have found no such God in Ur or in all the land of the Chaldees. When I was

young, my heart was moved to go in quest of him, but I did not go; there were other things; and now there is no desire." The sadness in the old priest's voice deepened into despair. "In the appointed time the birds that should go to the south are eager to go, but the bird that does not fly then loses his eagerness and stays behind—to perish."

Abram stopped and turned so that the moonlight fell on Ishtar's withered face: "You also feel that there is such a great invisible god, one with whom a man may talk as one who talks with his friend."

The old priest looked into the thrilled, ambitious face that peered into his: "My heart tells me that there is such a God, but in what land he dwells I know not. But if a man goes in quest of him because of the emptiness of his heart, he shall know when he reaches the land where the invisible God dwells; yea, and he shall be guided to that land, for surely the Invisible seeketh such to worship him."

"Then I will go in quest of the living God!" Abram affirmed, and made a solemn vow to confirm his decision. "Will not you also come with me?"

The old man shook his head. An even deeper note of sadness came into his voice, "I am the slave of Nannar, and my bonds are heavy."

In the last dim light of the setting moon, even as the night faded into dawn, Ishtar raised his hand in blessing, and Abram bowed his head, "May the blessing of the unknown God who inhabiteth eternity go with you and give you peace."

Nor did they ever meet again.

* * *

Before the day was old Abram stood again in the presence of an old man to whom he owed an unpayable debt of love, his father, Terah. For many a day Terah's eyes had been

dim, but his physical force was not abated, and, having lost the outward vision, the inward vision of the soul and of the mind had grown more clear. So that Abram still loved to sit at Terah's feet and ask him of this and that, even as he had done as a little child. Nor did Abram ever regret those hours of close communion or sorrow that he had followed the way of his father's counsel and command.

Now the old man sat on a cushion-piled divan in a tall room in a house of sun-dried brick from which shutters of finely carved cedar wood shut out the light that would have pained his eyes. Abram, tall and handsome with the sturdy strength of manhood, sat at his father's feet and opened all his heart to him and told him all that he had told Ishtar, the priest of Nannar, and much more. He told at last of the great vow which he had made and then caught back his words.

"In my eagerness and my haste I forgot my duty to thee, my father," Abram apologized lovingly, kissing his father's darkly veined hand. "My vow must wait until thou hast no longer any need of me; and if the invisible God is such an one as my heart tells me he is, he will have mercy upon me because my vows have not been sooner paid. For thou, my father, art too old for long journeyings and for strange lands."

He would have said much more, but his father laid his hands upon his lips and stopped him.

"My son," Terah replied slowly, "my day is far spent. It is already evening, and soon the night will fall and I shall pass to that land where the mysteries of life are made clear and the souls of men are weighed in the balances of the high gods. It matters little, I think, from what land a man comes thither, or in what place he lays down the body he has out-

worn. It matters everything what manner of soul a man brings there."

Abram would have interrupted him to tell him how long he hoped his days would be, but Terah put up his hand, and his son kept silence.

"Your days are many," he went on; "you have your soul to win, your God to find and serve. Who am I that in the evening of my days I should be a fetter about the feet of those who walk in the morning? Whither thou goest I will go, and when the night falls I shall not miss the way to the lands beyond."

Abram kissed his father much and tried to assure him of his love and of his care. And in his heart Abram knew that it was because he was the son of such a man as Terah that this quest was in his heart, this unresting passion in his soul.

* * *

Before many days had passed a great caravan set out from Ur to follow the way of the desert that led to Haran, five hundred miles to the north, a city where the traffic of the camel caravans between Nineveh and Damascus and Egypt never ceased. Abram rode at the head of the long procession on a tall riding camel. In his flowing blue cloak and his white headcloth confined with a rope of camel hair Abram looked a leader of men. Terah was carried in a wide tent-like litter on another camel. As they came to the place on the trail from which they could see the city for the last time Abram halted his camel and looked back. He had not dreamed that it would prove so hard a thing to leave the city. Yet Ur had meant much to him. The very stones of the place were precious in his eyes, and he was proud of his citizenship. He was leaving women whom he had respected and men whom he had loved and a city in which he had been held in high esteem and going out, not knowing whither he

went. Ahead of him the indistinct desert trail stretched away into the distance, and no man could see the end. Surely that was his life.

Even as he looked Abram felt as though a great voice spoke clearly in his heart. It was not a voice which he had heard before; yet it seemed like a voice with which he had always been familiar.

"Fear not, for I will be with thee."

His fears were hushed. His anxieties faded away. He had heard the voice of the invisible God of whom he was in quest.

"Whither goest thou?" one asked of Abram as he rested that night at a camping place in the desert.

"I know not," he said. "I journey at the command of the invisible God, he who made heaven and earth. I go toward the land which he has promised me."

The stranger asked no more, deeming that Abram must be mad with much thinking and being afraid of those who go in quest of the deep things of God.

XVIII

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

The teller of Old Testament stories is often in difficulties through the problem of changing ethical standards and a developing revelation of God. The problem is to tell the story in such a way that the picture of God shall be a true one and the idea of religious duty set forth shall be adequate and abiding. In the story of the offering of Isaac the peril is that we leave in the mind of the child an idea of a God who desired human sacrifice. The teaching, of course, is the revolt against and the break-away from human sacrifice; the manner in which Abraham, in a day when the sacrifice of the first-born was customary, came to a clearer, truer vision of the will of God. I have endeavored to write the story from that angle that it may serve as an example of the way in which the ethical problems of the Old Testament stories may be met.

The fact that the sacrifice of the firstborn was so customary that with all their love men dared not break the law has to be made clear. You do that by telling how Abraham looked to other men. Then you picture the journey and the deepening gloom in Abraham's heart, contrasted with Isaac's light-hearted interest. Keep the details of the scene on Mount Moriah as few as possible. Suggest rather than picture them. Develop the joy of the homeward journey and, if there is time, add a scene telling how Abraham and Isaac reached the camp from which they had set out with so much fear.

THE name of Abraham, the friend, was often on the lips of the men who met beneath the clump of trees at the cross-roads and never without reverence and praise. Even though they could not understand his worship of an invisible God, they could understand his patience and courtesy and kindness. But they often looked at the growing lad who rode by the old chieftain's side, who by many signs was marked out as his heir. It was common knowledge that Isaac was the son of Abraham's wife, while Ishmael was only the son of one of his slave women. They could not help admiring Isaac's slim, supple strength, tall and lissome as a

bow, and they knew in their own hearts that the greatest desire of any man was that he should have a son to sit in his place and carry on his name. But for all that, when Abraham had passed out of hearing, they would discuss with nodding heads all that Abraham was doing and would wonder if it was wise and well.

It was felt that the first son of the family should follow the first fruits of the field and the first lambs of the flock to the smoking altar of whatever gods men served, and they felt that any man was foolish who dared the wrath of the high gods by withholding from them that which was their right. None of them wished any harm to befall Abraham. Any man was welcome in Abraham's tent, and none suffered hurt at his hands, but they were afraid that the gods would be avenged upon him if he kept back his son from the sacrifice. No one dared to mention it to Abraham, for they knew how great was the love and the pride he had for Isaac.

One day Abraham and Isaac passed the crossroads accompanied only by a couple of servants. A led donkey was laden with firewood, and a torch smoldered in an earthenware pitcher carried by one of the servants. Their passing did not attract much attention, for men often went to offer sacrifices on lonely hilltops or beneath tall clumps of trees where they thought the high gods would dwell, and none had ever heard the dwelling place of the God whom Abraham worshiped. Some doubted whether he was going on such a journey, noticing the absence of any animals for sacrifice.

Abraham's face was troubled as he journeyed. His lips were sealed from speech, and his mouth was set in a hard, straight line as though he were fighting some inward pain. Even the laughing, interested comments of Isaac, who was attracted by every new turn of the road and every fresh

flower among the wayside rocks and the birds and animals that flew and ran before them, did not rouse his father to any life or laughter. Isaac's failure to win his father's friendship worried the lad. He tried harder to find something in which Abraham would be interested, but it was all in vain. The dark lines in the old chieftain's face only grew deeper and darker still, and Isaac's laughter seemed to be a pain so deep that Abraham winced as he heard it. Neither Isaac nor the servants had ever seen such gloom upon his face before. What made it the more perplexing was that now and then he would call Isaac to him and treat him with strange tenderness as though trying to compensate for his gloomy ways.

Three days they journeyed thus and came at last to where Mount Moriah towered before them dark and heavy and mysterious, with the last rays of the sunset flaming on its summit as though some great altar fire had been kindled there. Abraham felt that he had come to the place of the altar of the invisible God whom he served. Next morning Abraham and Isaac set out alone to ascend the mountain. Isaac's youthful strength made light of the closely bundled faggots of wood he had upon his shoulders, and he walked with eager steps as though the mountain road was as easy as a level plain. As they climbed the gloom on Abraham's face became deeper and darker. When Isaac caught his father's eyes fixed upon him there was something in them which hurt him. The sunshine died out in the lad's heart. There was no more song or laughter in his lips. It was as though the shadow on his father's spirit had settled upon his also.

At last he ventured to put a question which had been troubling him for some time. "We have the fire and the wood. But where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham's voice was rough and deep, and the accent was curt and cold, "God will provide himself a lamb for sacrifice."

Then, without further explanation, he strode on ahead, fearful that Isaac might see the tears that were wet upon his face. He must be obedient to the will of the God whom he served, but he had not dreamed that obedience would be so costly and so difficult.

The bare mountain top was reached at last, and a few loose stones were piled together to make a rough altar, and the fire was kindled. Still no animal was available for the sacrifice, and Isaac dared not ask again. Suddenly it all became clear. Isaac himself was to be the sacrifice. The last terrible preparations were made. Never had a God received such a sacrifice as this before. Before other altars men handed their sons to the priests for sacrifice. Here Abraham must himself be the sacrificing priest as well as the provider of the sacrifice. Love for the child of whom he was so fond and proud had struggled with his duty to his God, and the service of his God had won.

The last lingering farewell had been said. The knife held in Abraham's upraised hand gleamed in the sun. Then the voice that Abraham had heard and obeyed before spoke once more in his soul as clearly as though some one stood at his right hand.

"Lay not thine hand upon the lad. . . . Now I know—"

A stamping, tearing noise in the bushes behind him made Abraham turn quickly. A wild, mountain ram, his horns entangled in a thicket, was struggling vainly to get free. In a moment or two Isaac's bonds had been severed, and the remains of the dead ram smoldered upon the altar as Abraham and Isaac made their way down the mountain road again. Abraham was no longer afraid. All the love he

had been afraid to show before poured itself out now upon the lad who had been given back to him, as one alive from the dead.

Once more the little company passed the men who lingered beneath the wayside trees, and Abraham went aside to speak to them. He told them of his God and of the sacrifice which had been turned away, and for the first time in the story of the world men heard of a God who did not desire human sacrifice. Men wondered at Abraham, but knew all his God had done for him; then, remembering their own sons who had been offered to the gods, they wished that Abraham's God was theirs also.

XIX

STORY TALK FOR THE JUNIORS: THE STORY OF GIDEON

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

Some teachers of children and young people prefer the story which is only told in outline. They find it easier to fill in the details for themselves. This is an example of how an outline story should be planned. In many ways it has involved a condensing of the Bible narrative, that the story may be kept within reasonable limits of space. In other ways a good deal of background material has been added. So many things which were perfectly familiar to those who heard the folk tale of Gideon told by hillside camp fires or in the shade of a great rock are strange and difficult to us and need much explanation. I have inserted this, and a somewhat similar study in the New Testament Section, "A Boy Like Other Boys," as examples of a story-teller's notes. Here you may see the scaffolding by whose help the story is built.

Note for the Leader

However the old epic of Gideon has been embroidered and elaborated during the centuries, the point and moral of the story is clear: it was intended to prove that God is able to do very wonderful things with very slender resources. The real hero of the story is not Gideon, but Gideon's God. "The Spirit of the Lord clothed himself upon Gideon."

Find the point of contact in the difference there is in human capacity. One boy can play better baseball with a plain stick than another can with a regulation bat. One girl can draw better with a burnt stick than another can with a ten-dollar artist's outfit.

But few people do all we are able to do. Psychologists declare that few of us use more than half our brains. Yet we are always envying some one else. "If only I had

Mary's brains," "If only I had Jack's courage," "If only I had Elsie's voice—"

"You never know what you can do till you try" is only half the truth. The whole is, "You never know what you can do till you try with God." Jesus does wonders with men, makes Peter a fisher of men instead of a fisherman; teaches Matthew to write a Gospel instead of a customs collector's books; makes Paul the builder of a new world instead of a Jewish rabbi; makes Carey a great missionary pioneer instead of a country minister, and Grenfell the hero of Labrador instead of a Harley Street specialist.

Gideon said: "If only I were a leader. If only I had courage. If only I dared—"

The First Picture

Gideon hiding under the wide leaves of the vines, beating out a handful of corn with a flail. Swish-thud! Swish-thud! Only pausing to pull together the unthreshed ears. His heart full of sorrow and hate because of his murdered brothers. Year after year the tide of Bedouin raiding had gone farther until it reached the sea. Crops and cattle carried off, men hid shamefully in the hills. The whole tribe should have avenged the murder of Gideon's brothers, but no one dared.

"If only I were a leader. If only I had courage. If only I dared."

As if in answer to his thoughts came the call: "Go in this thy might. The Lord is with thee."

Gideon shrinks from the burden, fears the responsibility, but knows he cannot escape. He sees something else, that Israel can only conquer Midian when they are true to God.

The Second Picture

Late at night, only moon and stars. Near at hand a jackal

howls, an owl flies past silently, like a white moving shadow. A group of men talking in low tones near the old Baal altar.

They put their shoulders under the flat altar stone and fling it down the hill, breaking it into a dozen pieces, hurl the smaller stones after it, then dust their hands as though they have handled something unclean. The village has not heard, or if it has heard takes no notice.

Ten axes got to work upon the sacred trees, and they fall one after another. Then they build another altar and offer the sacrifice of a bullock.

Next morning the whole village gathers to see the destruction. Every one knows Gideon has done it. They are amazed that the Baal, whom they all feared, had not destroyed him. Men began to think. If the Baal cannot defend his altar, can he save them from Midian? That night there is a meeting at the threshing floor of Joash, Gideon's father, and Gideon calls them to serve Jehovah, the living God, who can deliver.

The Third Picture

Thirty-two thousand men met at Gideon's call round the wall of Harod by Gilboa to fight against Midian. "Gideon the tree-feller will lead us." A strange army, some with old rusty weapons that had come out of Egypt; some with plowshares fastened to poles, some bows and arrows, some only clubs.

Gideon addressed them and told them of the courage and skill of their foes led by the Wolf and the Raven, as Midianite chiefs styled themselves, reminded them of peril and risk. At the back of the crowd a few men slipped away when they thought no one noticed. At last he uttered the common challenge, "Let him who is afraid go home!" No one moved at first, but at last by ones and twos and then by

whole companies men moved away until of the thirty-two thousand only ten thousand were left. Gideon had got rid of the cowards, now he must get rid of the rash.

The Fourth Picture

In the evening Gideon led his army to a spring at the foot of the hill that fed a pond about fifteen yards broad and two feet deep. The farther side was thick with tall reeds and bushes, making a natural cover for any lurking foe. Careless of danger, most of the men flung themselves on their knees and drank with their mouths in the water. Men so careless could not be relied upon for an enterprise as perilous as that which Gideon planned. Now and again a man came and drank as only Easterns can. Stooping slightly, eyes alert, weapons so held in the left hand that they could be instantly snatched by the right, these men threw the water in a continuous stream through their lips, scarcely stooping for a moment. Gideon noted them and called them aside. When all had passed he numbered them —three hundred men. And Midian was a great host.

The Fifth Picture

Gideon resolved to spy out the Midianite camp for himself. He took Phurah, his servant, and crept down in the twilight, hiding behind rocks and bushes, lying low like a black panther. The night was moonless and starless, and they overheard two men of Midian talking.

"It was a loaf of barley bread. It rolled down the hillside into our camp, fell against the king's tent, and knocked it over. What meaneth such a dream?"

"The meaning—it is as plain as the nose upon your face. It is this Gideon. God hath given Midian and all the camp into his hand."

And Gideon was listening to them! Back Gideon crawled

and roused the sleeping three hundred. He carefully explained the plan, made all the preparations, and by a score of different paths his men crept down to the attack. Burdened with the pitchers that held the smoldering torches, the rams' horns swinging about their necks, their hands grasping their swords in case of instant need, they crept gradually nearer.

The goal was reached without mishap. It was still two hours of dawn, and they waited for the signal. At last it came. A wolf howled dismally across the camp. It was answered by another close at hand, by half a dozen more at different points. Crack upon crack rang out as the pitchers were shattered. Trumpets blared out from three hundred different points. Three hundred smoldering torches were waved about men's heads until they flared. "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"

Panic and fear ruled the Midianite camp and stampeded them. Men fled every way n the darkness, striking blindly at whomsoever they happened to meet. Camels screamed in terror, broke their hobbles, and fled in any direction that promised escape, overturning tents and trampling down men in their terror.

There was only one possible way of escape, through the narrow mouth of the valley that led to the fords of Jordan. Here Gideon had placed in ambush the men he had not dared to risk in the night attack. The Midianites were so terribly defeated that they came no more into the land of Israel.

Peace had come by one who was of no more account in Israel than a loaf of barley bread, food so common that no one would eat it if they could help it.

"You never know what you can do till you try—with God."

XX

DEBORAH'S JEWELS

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

It would not be wise to attempt to tell this story to a group of Junior boys. They would be inclined to wave it aside as "sob stuff." But girls would appreciate it, especially if they were told beforehand that a woman's marriage chain in Israel, the chain of silver pieces a bride wore upon her forehead, was the Eastern equivalent of the Western wedding ring. See the parallel in Jesus' story of the lost piece of silver. It may be protested that this is a story which is wholly imaginative, a story for which there is no scriptural warrant whatever. Surely of all things on earth a subscription list is the most dull and uninteresting. But behind the items in the subscription list of those who brought gifts to David for the building of the house of God there must have been many a story of love and sacrifice similar to the story of "Deborah's Jewels." Incidentally, it serves to illustrate another device open to the story-teller. The lesson was the story of "Two Mites Which Made a Farthing," a story very familiar and of very slender material. Instead of attempting to tell it again I told this story as a parallel. It is a device which is often helpful when you have to do with time-worn lesson material.

You begin by building up the scene. Notice how movement, color, scent, and sound are all woven into it. Each helps to capture imagination and create interest. Then the interest is narrowed to the question of gifts and is still further focused on one woman. You suggest the worth of the gift through Deborah's memories. The suggestion of an old man who understood receiving the gift from an old woman provides an appropriate climax.

THE tide of excitement in the steep, narrow streets of Jerusalem was rising higher with every passing day. The king's purpose to build a temple, "a house exceedingly magnifical," for the Lord God had long since lost its novelty. But every day there was some new wonder to set tongues wagging and eyes staring with fresh interest. Higher and higher rose the great heaps of cedar wood whose fragrance scented the air, and day after day there

seemed no end to the long trains of paired oxen who dragged more and yet more wood to the hilltop.

Long strings of camels stretched out along the road, looking with contemptuous scorn on this well-wooded land, with its steep ravines and its towering hills. Stones afire with the glory of sunset skies were piled up in great masses, and in the quarries below the temple mount the clang of the masons' hammers and the clamorous cries of the task-masters never ceased from dawn to dusk. Strange faces became common in the city streets, skilled workers in many trades brought from far lands, men who dressed in outlandish fashion and spoke barbarous tongues.

When men met in the market place or in the gate there was little else to talk of than the temple; and when women waited their turn in the evening by the well or walked together up the hill with the jars upon their shoulders, or when they sat in the cool evening on the roofs, it was always to this subject that the talk came around. This had King David given already, and that he had it in his heart to give, and this command had he laid upon Solomon; so the news was told and retold, losing nothing as it passed from mouth to mouth until men were staggered by the vastness of the king's treasures and the immensity of his gifts.

Nor was it only the king's giving of which men spoke. It had been known for long that King David intended to appeal to the people for gifts as generous as his own. Wealthy merchants and men of high standing in the king's court, princes and rulers of the people, fired by the king's generosity, resolved to make their gifts worthy of his. Fathers talked long in secret with their sons as family treasures were taken out and handled and judged.

Women sat and handled greatly treasured jewels and debated in their minds which could be spared and what was

most worthy of the cause. In all manner of ways preparations went forward for the great day when King David should stand to receive the gifts of his people.

In a tiny one-roomed house in a narrow street lived Deborah. Her husband had been dead these many years, and there had never been a child to gladden their home. Life was very lonely. She had no one to protect her, no one to work for her, and her strength was growing less from year to year. The little house was very clean, but very bare, and there was seldom enough food in it for more than a single day. It had been easy when she was younger to go out and glean in wheat field and olive grove and vineyard and in one way or another gather a little food; but now Deborah had scarcely strength to carry her half-filled water jar up the hill from the fountain. She was always glad if one of the neighbors took pity on her and carried an old woman's jar as well as her own.

She had had many jewels once, for Deborah had been handsome, and Joseph had delighted to deck her beauty with fine work of gold and precious stones. But one by one she had taken the jewels down to the house of Jacob the goldsmith and had come home to count the few shekels and use them carefully to purchase daily bread. There was only one piece left—the marriage chain that Joseph had bound across her forehead on the day when he had led her away as a bride to his own house. Many days had she gone without food rather than barter that for bread. It was the one thing left that bound her to the dear, happy days of early womanhood and to the husband of her youth.

She carefully shut and barred the door and with trembling fingers lit the wick of the little lamp. She waited till it began to burn clear, then walked slowly to the place where she kept her treasure behind a loose stone in the

wall. She hobbled back to her stool and sat down with the chain spread across her narrow lap. She touched it as delicately as though she feared a rough touch would rub off some wonderful bloom. She took up the coins and studied them one by one. Then with fumbling fingers she placed it round her forehead again. How loose it was! The flesh had withered round the hollow temples, and the once abundant hair was painfully thin. But the very touch seemed to transform her. She felt young once more. Deborah saw herself in all the beauty that had won Joseph's early love. The dull old eyes shone with pride. She walked erect and with a confident step, then suddenly it left her again. After all, she was only a feeble old woman, and what was the good of pretense?

But her marriage chain—it seemed more precious than ever now it had proved capable of working so magically upon her. The old face was smiling, a reflection of the great light still shone in the old eyes. She put it back in its dark hiding place, stooped to pick up the stone to replace it, then raised herself and took the chain out of its place once more and stood looking at it.

"The house is not for man, but for the Lord God."

That was how the king's word had run. She nodded her head emphatically, as though she had made some great decision, then put back the chain and replaced the stone.

All Israel had gathered that day at the king's command, and on the high platform all the great men of Israel were grouped about David, now a bent, white-bearded man, and Solomon, his stalwart, handsome son. In a procession so long that it appeared to be endless, the people passed before the king and laid down their gifts, gold was piled up until the sunlight made it dazzling, and no one cared to watch the mass of silver; jewels that held all the color of sea and

sky were massed there. Deborah joined the slow-moving crowd and was carried along with it. She was strangely weak to-day. The excitement had wearied her. She leaned heavily on her stick, and often some eager, enthusiastic giver would push her aside and step in front of her. Her gift, only ten silver pieces, it was so little, and she was shabby and old.

At last she reached the platform, and King David's eyes fastened themselves upon her. He was more interested in the old than in the young that day. He saw what she held in her hand as she stretched it out to lay it down, saw the lingering, last look she gave it, knew how precious it was and how much her sacrifice meant, and moved a half step forward as though to give it back as something too precious to be received, then stepped back again, shook his head, and smiled as Deborah's eyes caught his. They were both old people now, and David understood.

Deborah turned aside and went down the hill and somehow stepped so briskly that, but for the staff in her hand, you would never know she had been lame.

XXI

OUR FATHERS HAVE TOLD US

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

This is an Old Testament example of a method I have used in two or three of the New Testament stories included here, telling the story through the lips of an eye witness of the events. It is rigidly compressed and capable of almost indefinite expansion to meet any time limit. Incidentally, it may be helpful to draw attention to a device near the end, where I have tried to meet the problem of "a man after God's own heart." The explanation and defense put into the lips of old Ethan will carry much more weight and conviction than if it was merely the teacher's comment on the story. If a moral must be attached to a story try to weave it in in such a way as this and make it an integral part of the narrative, not something utterly detached as an appended moral always is in spite of our desperate efforts to tack it on.

Old Ethan sat in a great chair in the house and seldom left it in these days. There had been a time when he would have laughed at any suggestion that his place would be among the women and the children—had he not been one of David's mighty men?—but the Philistine sword that almost severed his leg ended his fighting days. But the children loved him. Who could make such wooden swords as he could, or tell how battles were fought, with a score of twigs for men and a few stones for mountains? Who could tell such stories as he could tell of black-haired Saul and the boy David, as lovely as any girl, and the tall Prince Jonathan?

"A story, Father Ethan!" the children would clamor. "A story before we go to rest, for see, the sky is already red with the sunset."

"But what can I tell you? You know all my stories till I dare not change a word."

"Tell us again of David, of David when you were a boy."

"Come then!" The children gathered round. Beth, the

tiniest one, climbed to her place on the old man's knee. David, named after the family's hero, stood behind the chair, the others sat upon the floor or stood beside the story-teller with their eyes fixed upon his face.

"I was a boy in the army of Saul," the old man began. "I had fled from the keeping of the flocks and had told the captain of the hundred that my father had sent me. The captain called me a baby and would have sent me home to the women, but a hare ran over the hill, and I killed it with a stone from my sling. 'Might not such a stone bring down a man of the Philistines?' I said, and the captain allowed me to stay, for some of the men had praised me for my skill."

"But David, Father Ethan, tell us of David!" Little Beth, in her eagerness, pulled at his beard.

"Dost think I am a lion, child, that thou must hold me by the beard to kill me?" the old man laughed and rubbed his chin.

"Day after day the Philistine, Goliath, had defied the armies of Israel, and no man dared go out against him. Some would have gone, but their fellows would not permit them, fearing that they would be slain. One morning I heard a cry from the foremost ranks, and I ran forward. Goliath was crying his challenge, and I thought that maybe Black Saul, the king, had gone out against him. When I looked I saw a boy no older than myself gathering sling stones from the brook. Goliath came down and laughed at him, but the laugh died in his throat, for a stone from David's sling killed him. The hosts of the Lord destroyed the men of the Philistines that day."

"And he was only a boy," young David muttered, half to himself.

"No taller than thou art," old Ethan replied with a smile

for his favorite grandson, "but handsomer far. And Prince Jonathan took him for his friend from that day forward. It was hard. Saul hated him. I saw the dark clouds gather on the king's face as clouds gather for a thunderstorm and felt afraid. Though had I known what those clouds meant I had feared more greatly still. The soul of Jonathan was torn in twain between his love for his father and his love for his friend. But, look, 'tis sunset already, and the story is scarce begun."

"Tell us of the outlaw days," the children cried.

"No man ever knew the hills and valleys of this land as David knew them. No man's eyes could read signs as David read them. By a turned stone or a broken twig he could tell you who had passed and when. We were all men whom Saul would have hanged could he have caught us, and we counted not our lives dear. But David watched over each of us as over his own soul. There in the caves of Adullam he hid us, or showed us how to lie unseen among the rocks and bushes while the men of Saul were searching for us, and if there were any enterprise of special peril he would go himself instead of risking our lives. Even when he was an old man they found it hard to keep him out of the battle."

A tear fell down the old man's face as he thought of the fights he had been away from because of his wounded leg. The story went on and on, the sunset faded out of the sky, and the dark came down like a black curtain. Still the children listened spellbound to stories they had often heard before.

"So Saul and Jonathan died on Mount Gilboa, and we made David king in Gilgal and at last in Jerusalem. But he was not as good a man then as he had been in the hills and the camp. Days spent with women in courts and

palaces are not good for a man. He became more concerned about his clothes than his sword and sinned so that we grew ashamed of him. David the hero died in the great house at Jerusalem."

"But the priest says that David was a man after God's own heart," one of the children looked up with a puzzled expression. Ethan's sorrow at the end of the story had always perplexed them.

"So he was!" The old man's answer was almost fierce in its emphasis. "David fell, but he rose again. The man after God's own heart is the man who, even though he is defeated, will go back to fight again another day. Come, children, the stars are out, and 'tis time you were at rest."

XXII

FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

This story and the following story of "The Wise Men" are specimens of the way in which a familiar story over which story-tellers and teachers despair because it has been told so often may be made fresh and interesting by the expansion of the details of the story and the elaboration of the background. You will notice that in these retold stories no incidents have been added, no new characters have been introduced; all that has been done is to tell in some detail things only suggested in the Bible narrative and to supply such details of background as help the imagination of to-day to visualize and feel the life of a distant yesterday. There was no more need to do this in that day than there is for a modern writer to do more than suggest the noise and volume of the traffic in a street of London or New York. But the writer whose story is placed in the London of Henry VIII or in the Pennsylvania which George Washington knew cannot take his background for granted, and the story whose plot is slight is made interesting through the re-creation of an unfamiliar background. So when you are faced with the problem of imparting freshness to a time-worn story pay much attention to the background and see what is the possibility of elaborating the details of the action. There are, of course, other ways of dealing with the too familiar story. Of those methods the treatment of some of the other stories will provide illustrations.

There are three figures in this story whom the story-teller must clearly see and, as far as possible, impersonate. The first part of the story is dominated by the king. Voice, gesture, attitude must all suggest the character, the stiftless weakness of Zedekiah. Ebed-melech gradually comes into the narrative. His quick decision, his alert mind fills the second scene. He will speak briskly. His commands will be imperative. In the third scene Jeremiah controls the situation by his character. You have to feel rather than see him. The dark night, the secret meeting, the dying fire, the king's querulous, weak pleading all lead up to the inevitable climax. Notice how background is used to create atmosphere in this story.

ZEDEKIAH, king of Jerusalem by the will of Nebuchadnezzar, sat huddled in his chair of state. His unwashed

face and undressed hair and beard were matched by the stained, shabby robe which hung loosely about his sagging shoulders and his flabby body. Even in the king's palace the hardness of the times was making itself felt. There was no bread in the street of the bakers, and those who had a little meal hoarded it and ate it in secret lest some desperate neighbor should rob them of it. All this Zedekiah knew full well, but what could be done? The king ran his fingers through his tangled beard. Things were even as Jeremiah had said. He hated him, and yet he could not forget him. He had hoped that the prophet would prophesy smooth and pleasant things, but instead he seemed to delight in telling of still darker and more terrible things which were to come.

"Thou shalt be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon," Jeremiah had said at that last secret interview.

The king trembled at the memory of it. He stretched out his arms and looked at his bony wrists. He almost feared that he could see the chains upon them already. A great sigh shook him. He was on the point of tears. He had not wanted to be king. He had always followed the advice of his counselors. He had even asked Jeremiah to pray for him. And now "Thou shalt be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon." His hands fell nervously into his lap. His full lower lip began to tremble. He huddled still more dejectedly in his chair. What was there for him to do but to wait for the fate that should overtake him?

A rattle of curtain rings roused him, and he sat up and smoothed out his robe. A servant entered, bowing low.

"May it please the king! The princes of the people of Jerusalem desire audience of the king on matters of grave importance."

The king signed that they were to be admitted and fussily endeavered to straighten his hair and beard and to assume

pose of greater dignity. Once more the curtains were drawn aside, and Ebed-Melech, the king's chamberlain, entered, followed by the four princes who had desired the interview. The men made casual bows and then stood facing the king, not pretending to hide the contempt they felt for him. They were men who had come to demand, not to petition. Zedekiah looked at them from under lowered eyebrows. He read the evil in their heavy faces and their shifty eyes and sank into his chair again as he saw the scornful defiance with which they regarded him. These were the men whom Jeremiah had described as "bad figs" which Nebuchadnezzar had left because they were not worth taking into exile, "bad figs which cannot be eaten, they are so bad."

Ebed-Melech had taken his place behind his master's chair. He had grown old in the service of the kings of Judah. His once abundant black hair was now white and scanty; his black face was wrinkled like a walnut shell, and his memories of his native Ethiopia were far off and dim. He had stood behind King Jehoiakim when Jeremiah had prophesied to him of dark things and foretold the punishment of folly, and he had seen the word of Jeremiah fulfilled. When Nebuchadnezzar had besieged the city in the brief days of Jehoiachin, Jeremiah had been wise and true in the unheeded counsel he had given then, and Ebed-Melech had grown to love and trust him, even though he trembled at the dark things the prophet foretold. The furrows grew deep in his forehead and the lines hard about his mouth now as he heard the princes attacking Jeremiah.

"Pray have this fellow Jeremiah put to death; he takes the heart out of all the citizens and soldiers left within the city by talking like this. The fellow is out to ruin the city, not to help it."

The old Ethiopian's eyes glared and his mouth worked. If only he dared to interrupt and tell the king all that was in his mind. But he was compelled to keep silence, and the princes knew it and gloated over it. He found it hard to disguise the contempt he felt for them and for their counsel. If only he had dared he would have interrupted them publicly and bidden his master heed the counsel of Jeremiah, the man of God. But he dared not. He knew how jealous they were of him already because of his influence with the king. He knew how they sneered at him and called him "the king's black shadow." Those things counted for little alongside the indignation he felt that a good man should be evil spoken of and shamefully treated. Such a thing was a shame to any king and to any people.

He looked down at his royal master. Zedekiah had huddled down in his chair again, like a sick man too weak to hold himself erect. His head had sunk between his shoulders, and his chin was down upon his breast. He smoothed his robe over his knees with his thin fingers; and the princes, rejoicing in the power they had over him, let the last remnants of deference die out of their voices and spoke with greater demand.

"He weakeneth the hands of the men of war. He is a traitor. Let him suffer a traitor's fate."

"He is in your hands," Zedekiah mumbled at last. "What can the king do against you?"

The princes murmured their gratitude and departed. Once more they had triumphed over the man whose scorn they feared almost as much as they feared the arrows of Nebuchadnezzar. Ebed-Melech also hurried out and gave orders to a servant whom he could trust to watch what should be done to the man of God. He had little fear that the princes would actually put Jeremiah to death. Even

yet the prophet filled so large a place in the affections of the people that that would not be possible. But he was afraid of what might befall.

* * *

It was not many hours afterwards, two or three, that the messenger stood once more before Ebed-Melech. "I speak concerning Jeremiah, the man of God." The Ethiopian looked at him eagerly. "Say on! Quickly!"

"The princes have caused him to be put into the cistern that is before the court of the guard, and I heard them say to the soldiers, 'Should you forget him, it will not be remembered against you.'"

He saw the place with vivid imagination, a bottle-shaped pit, wide at the bottom and narrow at the top, with a great stone upon the mouth that shut out both light and air—a place with slimy walls along which foul, creeping things left glistening trails, with its bottom deep in foul-smelling mud and slime into which a weak man might fall and be suffocated. His sympathy for Jeremiah burst out afresh. The king had gone to the gate of Benjamin, where he was accustomed to sit that all men might be able to come to him with their problems and their needs. Few men came, except those who came with rags on their protruding bones and begged the king for the bread he could not give. Ebed-Melech waited impatiently while suppliant after suppliant was turned away empty. Then he stepped forward and made a low obeisance.

"Be it known unto thee, O king, thus and thus have these men of evil done to Jeremiah, the man of God, and he is likely to die."

Moved as easily by Ebed-Melech's sympathy as he had been by the half-veiled threats of the princes, fearful that Jeremiah might die even now, Zedekiah made an order for

the prophet's release, impressed his seal upon it, and handed it to Ebed-Melech.

"Take men with thee—take thirty men—and lift him up out of the pit. Haste thee, lift him out before he die! Haste! In the king's name! Should he die, who will there be to pray to Jehovah for me?"

The chamberlain hurried away, the king's petulant cries following him till he was out of hearing. He hurriedly ransacked one store cupboard after another, got ropes from one, a bundle of old rags from another, gathered the thirty men which the king had ordered, and, in a very little while, was interviewing the commander of the guard house into whose charge Jeremiah had been committed. At first the officer was inclined to desregard even the order with the king's seal upon it, but when he saw the thirty men whom Ebed-Melech had brought with him he changed his tone. He bowed politely and declared that at all times the king's word must be obeyed.

The king's men thrust a pole through the iron ring that was in the middle of the stone that closed the mouth of Jeremiah's prison and lifted the stone off. The prophet's voice was feeble as he answered them, but the inflow of fresh air revived him sufficiently to allow him to follow Ebed-Melech's instructions. He was to put the old, soft rags under his arms in such a fashion that the pull of the ropes would not hurt him.

Filthy with the black, oozy mud of his prison, Jeremiah was pulled up into the light. The foul air of the cistern had almost poisoned him in his already half-starved state. He stood blinking in the light that was too strong for his old eyes while he held the black man's hands in both of his and tried to stammer out his gratitude to the man who had

been so real a friend to him. The ties of friendship, already strong, were to be far stronger from that day forward.

* * *

The prophet was still kept in prison, but he was back in his old place in the court of the guard before the palace where his friends had free access to him and where he had opportunity of declaring publicly what he felt to be the message of God. There the princes saw him as they passed to and fro, and his presence was a constant reminder of the failure of their plot. There Ebed-Melech, the king's black shadow, came with messages from his master and carried back again the prophet's word.

The streets of Jerusalem were still, and in the palace no one stirred except the sentry who paced to and fro before the gate. Presently there was a low knocking on the gate. Two darkly cloaked men stood without. One whispered the secret password to the guard, and they passed into the palace and through the palace into a secret place in the temple. King Zedekiah sat before a round brazier filled with glowing charcoal. The room was warm, but his thin hands trembled as he held them out to the blaze. The two men who had entered secretly stood revealed as Ebed-Melech, the chamberlain, and Jeremiah, the man of God.

"Tell me truly," Zedekiah pleaded, too eager to wait for greetings to be exchanged, "what is the message of Jehovah?" His faded eyes searched Jeremiah's face as though he would read the word before it could be spoken.

Jeremiah was long before he replied. At last he looked the king in the face. "If I tell thee, thou wilt put me to death."

Zedekiah shrank for a moment, then with eager lips he swore by the most solemn of all oaths that Jeremiah should not suffer. The two men faced each other across the red

glow that lit up both their faces, and Jeremiah told of the destruction and doom that should come upon the king and upon his city, unless Zedekiah would surrender to the Babylonians.

"I dare not," Zedekiah cried, scarce able to suppress the desire to scream aloud his horror and his fear, while in colors still more somber Jeremiah told of the fate that should befall him. It was dawn before the prophet left the trembling king, whose face was as gray as the cold ashes in the burned-out brazier. As Jeremiah reached the door the king called him back.

"Say no word to the princes of all you have told me, and you shall not die. If they know you have been here, tell them you came to ask to be released and I refused you."

The two men never met again. Jerusalem was captured and destroyed as Jeremiah had foretold, and Zedekiah was punished with infamous cruelty. But when the people were carried away captive among those who were left behind were two old men, Jeremiah and Ebed-Melech. One pictures them in the afterdays wandering amid the ruins of the city they loved, talking of the awful fate of the king they had tried to save and for whom all their endeavors had been vain.

XXIII

THE WISE MEN

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

The story of the wise men is so very familiar that in this version I have devoted most of the story to the preparations for the journey. I have only suggested details of the interview with Herod and the worship of the child because, unless incident is actually invented, it would be difficult to keep interest there. The details I have suggested are capable of being easily expanded. The story must be kept moving briskly, or interest will be lost. The discovery of the star, the discussion of the presents, the journey, the interview with Herod, the worship of the child, the return, must all follow each other in rapid succession.

The First Christmas Presents

In a far land was the house of Balthazar the wise, who watched the way of the stars in the skies and by their coming and their going learned many things. All men loved him, for his life was good, and all men trusted him because his words were wise. To his house there came one night Caspar, who also was wise in the way of the stars. Caspar's eyes were as bright as the stars he had been watching, and his face was as the face of one upon whom the sun shines. His words were few and hurried:

"The new star that has appeared, Balthazar, what does it mean?"

Almost before he had finished speaking there came another, Melchior, who was but a child compared to the age of Balthazar. He also came with shining eyes and lighted face. He pushed back the heavy hair that fell upon his forehead.

"O Balthazar, the aged and wise, there is a new star in the sky, a star which shines like a child of the sun. What

meaneth it? Surely it must mean a new king and a new kingdom."

Balthazar waited long before he replied, for that he was old and had learned to wait.

"I who am old, who have watched the skies until mine eyes have grown dim with watching, have never seen such a star as this. It must mean the coming of one who shall be king of kings. . . . This must we do. We must seek him, even though his throne be set up in some far land of the West."

Caspar, for the love he had for Balthazar, would have left him at home that he might be spared the hardships of the way.

"But thou art old," he said, "and the way may be long, even as thou hast said."

Balthazar put out his hand and laid it on Caspar's beard that was still long and silky.

"My days are many and the burden of my years is heavy, yet have I never failed to do that which is written in the stars. Now will the great ones strengthen me to do their will."

They made careful preparations for the journey. Food was prepared and packed. The finest camels in the market place were brought for riding and for baggage. Hours were spent in the Street of the Tentmakers finding such tents as would be most suitable for them, servants were engaged and men who would guard the travelers from robbers and wild beasts. At last all was ready, and the three wise men sat down together to talk of the presents they would bring, for none would go to do honor to a king without a gift in their right hands.

Melchior, who was the youngest of them all, had purchased ornaments of gold, finely fashioned and curiously

wrought. "For what but gold," said he, "is worthy to offer at the feet of one who is a great king?"

Caspar took out of its wrappings of purple silk a casket of hammered silver. Through holes pierced in the top there came the scent of a great sweetness, and when he opened the lid the fragrance was almost overpowering.

"Incense!" Melchior exclaimed. "That also is something worthy to be offered to a king. For is he not the gift of the gods and of the great one who is above all gods? Therefore we should offer incense of praise and thanksgiving."

"And what hast thou to offer him, Balthazar?" Caspar asked, for the old man had made no mention of his gift. Out of the broad sash of golden silk about his waist Balthazar took a small box of gold, wonderfully jeweled. He touched a spring, and the lid of the box flew open. The others glanced in, and then a look of wonder spread over both their faces.

"Myrrh?" Melchior questioned, as though he could not believe that he had seen aright.

"Myrrh!" Caspar echoed. "Is myrrh an offering fit for a king? Myrrh is for those who weep."

Balthazar snapped down the lid again and turned the box over in his hand. "I am old, and my eyes are dim. But I see sorrow in his star and the mist of tears. He will be a man acquainted with grief. I offer him myrrh for the easing of the pain of his heart."

The three wise men with their servants and their guards set out upon their journey, following the star which still led them toward the west. Six weeks they journeyed thus and came at last to Judæa and to the city of Jerusalem.

"Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" they asked of the Roman sentry who kept watch before the city gate.

"We have no king but Cæsar!" came the swift reply.

"In Judæa King Herod rules in great Cæsar's name. Who are ye that seek another king?"

He brought them to Herod himself, and, undismayed by the anger of the sentry, they put the same question to Herod. Herod paled and grasped the arms of his throne as though he felt it shake beneath him. Then he tried to hide his fear behind a laugh. He called for Jewish priests and rulers and asked them of ancient prophecy. From them he learned that it had been foretold that a king should be born in Bethlehem. Herod smiled upon the wise men, urged them to go to Bethlehem, and promised rich reward if they would bring him news of what they found.

Bowing low they departed, but men who had grown wise by long watching of the stars were able to read Herod's eyes and the heart he tried to hide from them. Once more the star shone above them as they set out upon the little journey to Bethlehem. Following it, they saw, as though the star stood still above, a little square, white house, against whose end leaned such a shed as a carpenter might use.

"This cannot be the place," Melchior cried, catching up his reins as though he would go farther.

"And yet," Balthazar pointed out, "the star stands still."

They made their camels kneel upon the ground and dismounted and entered the little house. There was nothing here to suggest a king; only a kindly faced, bearded man who had opened the door to them and on the farther side of the room a young peasant woman in a robe of blue with a tiny baby upon her knees. They entered without a word, old Balthazar leading. He crossed the room and looked into the face of the young child and his mother. As though he read something in their faces which answered all his questions, he sank upon his knees, put his hands before him,

and bowed his forehead to the ground. The others did likewise.

"And opening their treasures they offered unto Him gifts; gold and frankincense and myrrh."

Then, remembering what they had seen in the face of Herod the king, they returned to their own country by another way.

XXIV

A BOY LIKE OTHER BOYS

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

The telling of the stories of Jesus present peculiar problems, as I have suggested in an earlier chapter. You may take liberties with the characters of Joseph or Gideon, set them in situations for which there is no greater authority than your own vivid imagination, you may put words into their mouths which, as far as you know, were never spoken. You may form your own estimate of their characters and pass on to others the ideas you have in mind, and even though the ideas you have concerning them are misleading, no great harm will be done. But you cannot handle Jesus in that familiar way. You dare not put into his mouth words for which there is no authority or invent for him things which you have no warrant in the Gospels or tradition for assuming. At least, that is my personal jugdment. I find it difficult to be patient with writers who, for example, describe with much detail Jesus' love-making. I am quite prepared to believe that human love made as strong an appeal to Jesus as it does to any other normal man. I am quite ready to say reverently that the renunciation of human love was part of his self-emptying and sacrifice. But, even so, there are places where the feet of men are not pure enough to tread, and the peril of misrepresenting Jesus is so great that it should be avoided at all costs. I know that it may be objected that no man can paint a portrait of Jesus, either with brush or pen, which will be completely objective. In some degree it will be an interpretation. That is true; but the subjective should be kept to a minimum and not step over the boundary of invention.

Note for the Leader

We all find it difficult to believe that Jesus was just as human as we are, and that makes for unreality. What manner of boyhood was it that prepared Jesus for his work in manhood? For your children has Jesus' word any meaning, "As the Father sent me, even so send I you"? But that is what discipleship always means, is it not?

What is the relation between doing your home work faithfully and "preparing the way of the Lord"? What

has playing a clean game of hockey or baseball to do with bringing on the kingdom of God? May not the demand to be patient with baby and "the kids" be training for foreign missionary service?

For most children there is a great gulf fixed between childhood and "when I grow up." If you can show them that Jesus' childhood was normal and ordinary, will you not help to bridge that gulf? Preparation for life service is going on now.

If you have a copy, get some one to read or recite "A Boy Like Other Boys" from Oxenham's "Gentlemen, the King!"

Introductory Talk

Boys of Other Lands.—Every boy has a home, plays games, in most lands goes to school. Tell of school in Nazareth where Jesus was taught. After school and on holidays, played games, climbed hilltop to watch traffic go by, Roman soldiers, camel caravans, strings of donkeys with panniers, solitary priests, flocks of sheep for temple sacrifices.

Aim

To show that Jesus was a boy like other boys, human and strong, but keeping himself pure and clean, and so trained for his work as King.

Lesson Story

You cannot crowd the story of thirty years into one short story; so try to build up some word pictures.

The Home at Nazareth.—Jesus with Joseph and Mary and the younger children in the square white house, doves sunning themselves on the roof, vines about the walls. Somewhat bare interior. Loose mats on floor, lamp hanging

from roof, painted wooden chests holding family possessions. Colored "'beds" (quilts rolled up and put on shelf with household vessels). Near the door, waterpots with a handful of green leaves in mouths to keep water cool. Meals served on tray placed on wooden stool in middle of room. Dusk and the lamp lit, Joseph still working in shop adjoining, hear noise of saw and hammer, Mary sitting on box with children round her telling stories of Joseph and Samuel and David before bedtime, as mothers do still.

His School.—Square, bare room adjoining church (synagogue). No maps, no forms, no books, no blackboards, bench for teacher. Boys pour in—girls come occasionally—sit cross-legged on floor, old gray-bearded rabbi with scrolls of the law—which are like scenes rolled up in toy theater, or piece of paper rolled on two pencils. Boys repeat together law after him. Every lesson a memory lesson. Children learned by heart thousands of verses from Old Testament. Old Testament was spelling book, reader, geography, history, poetry, moral lessons, all in one. No lessons in middle of day or in hot weather, and about one day in four a holiday

His Games.—Played in market place and round the well with other boys and girls. Played at weddings and funerals. To-day you can hear children singing in market place at Nazareth in a sing-song jingle like "London Bridge is broken down":

> We have piped and ye not *rakedtoon.*
> We have mourned and ye not *arkedtoon.*

Sometimes spent long days, and maybe nights as well, with shepherds on hills. See John 10. Played in shop with Joseph's tools. Broad wooden swords or tall reeds for spears and played at Romans and Zealots. Acted Old Testa-

ment stories of David and Goliath and Jonathan and his armor-bearer, or Samson and the Philistines.

Three Days at Jerusalem.—It was a ten days' holiday away from home. Three days' journey south along a road where every mile there was something to remind them of Joseph or David, of Abraham or Saul. Imagine the excitement, the interest of the crowded roads, the boys from many towns who would make friends and compare notes, as boys always do. Three nights camping in the open, and then at last Jerusalem and the temple and three days there. Jesus in the groups of those who gather round famous rabbis and winning attention by his eager questioning. The Nazareth party start home in the morning, in evening discover that Jesus is not there. Back to Jerusalem. Picture Mary's anxiety. Then "Wist ye not?" (See Luke's story.)

The Carpenter's Son.—Not long after Joseph died, and Jesus had to carry on business and make living for Mary and the six or seven younger children. Perhaps it was then, helping Mary with the children, that he learned to tell wonderful stories. Children would play among shavings on floor. Sometimes he would make toys for them out of odd pieces of wood. Every one knew his kindness and sympathy even then. Made chests and tables and plows and yokes. Picture him seeing laden oxen with ill-fitting yoke that made load heavy and rubbed their shoulders, taking it off and replacing it with one of his own. His yokes were always easy. Tables he built always stood firmly. And all the time thinking about God, learning to pray, preparing to be a King.

XXV

ANSWERING THE CALL

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

The problem of what, for want of a better word, one may call the supernatural element is always present in the telling of Bible stories. The story of the Temptation of Jesus provides a typical example. The literal-minded Junior boy may find no difficulty to-day in accepting the idea of a translation as on a magic carpet from the wilderness to a pinnacle of the temple, and the easiest way of telling the story is to make the action outward rather than inward. But the easy way of to-day means sowing the seed of the problems of to-morrow. The supernatural element in the Gospels cannot be ignored, but the Eastern habit of telling the experiences of the inward life as though they were happenings of the outward life has to be faced, for the sake of the future years of those whom we teach. I have included this story as an illustration of the way in which that problem may be met.

It is necessary to have clearly in mind the development of this story. The story-teller must portray, at least in suggestion, the stir in the mind of Jesus by the reports of the preaching of John, the journey to Jordan, the baptism and the voice from heaven; the long days in the wilderness while Jesus tried to think out what his mission meant and the threefold temptation. That outline must be very clear, or the story will only make a blurred impression.

THE eighteen years that had passed since Jesus had dreamed of being in his Father's house and about his Father's business had brought very many changes. Joseph had died. Mary and the children had needed him as head of the house and as a bread winner for them. But deeper and stronger had grown the conviction that he had been sent into the world for something greater than the carpenter's shop in Nazareth. The dream of the coming Messiah was in the air. Everywhere people felt that the hour of his coming was at hand.

"It is written in the law that Elijah must first come,"

Jesus commented one day as men talked the question over in the carpenter's shop.

"And has he not come?" Daniel, the cloth merchant, answered. Every one paused, amazed. "When I was in Jerusalem a couple of days ago the whole city was stirred with the story of one John, a prophet who preaches somewhere in the Jordan valley. He is like Elijah, men said, clad in camel's hair with a leathern belt about his loins. And his message is like the man. He talks of axes laid against the foot of fruitless trees and of scorpions that flee before the forest fires."

Many stories of John the Baptizer, many fragments of his preaching, many tales of men turned from sin by his influence came to the carpenter's shop in the next few days. They were like a match that set a torch ablaze in the soul of Jesus. The voice that was calling him sounded loud and compelling in every story. The hand that pushed him out was heavy and strong on his shoulder. One evening Jesus hung his saw and ax upon the walls of the carpenter's shop for the last time, and in a couple of days he was standing in the midst of the crowd who listened to John.

Jesus watched the people who went down into Jordan that John might baptize them as a sign that they were ready to forsake their sins and were prepared to help the Messiah to establish his kingdom. One day Jesus joined them, as a sign that he also was ready to do the will of God.

John started when he saw Jesus and hesitated. He knew Jesus to be so different from the others who had come to his baptism. This was no viper fleeing from a wrath to come. This was no useless tree only fit for burning and for fuel of fire. John bowed his head in conscious unworthiness and humility, but Jesus persuaded him.

"It is necessary that I should fulfill all righteousness."

They came up out of the water side by side, John more conscious than ever that his great need was to be baptized of Jesus, and it was as though there was a great light about them, and a voice spake from heaven. "Thou art my Son, my beloved. In thee is my delight."

Jesus and John looked up. There was only the crowd among the brushwood on the bank, the water about their feet, the blue sky above their heads. But they knew that the voice had been the voice of God.

Jesus went away immediately. He felt that he needed to be alone with God that he might think out all it meant and all that he was called to do for God. He went into the wild, deserted country round the Jordan valley. The air was mild, shelter was abundant, and the wild beasts whose tracks he saw near the river bed, whose cries he heard at night, never came near him.

Absorbed in his problem, Jesus let the days pass by without counting them, without any real recognition of the fact that they were passing. Forty days went by, days of conflict and struggle. At last his body asserted itself. He had forgotten to eat; now he was hungry with a passionate desire. Weary and outworn, in the twilight the thin, flat, brown stones looked like loaves of bread. He stooped to pick them up, but the cold hardness mocked him. There with the stones in his hand a voice within was speaking persuasively.

"If it is true, if the voice at Jordan was real, if you actually are the Son of God, command these stones, and they shall be bread."

His hungry body commanded him. Only a word, only once. With a swift gesture he flung the stone from him with such force that it was shattered into a dozen fragments.

"I dare not! The Son of God is made for something

greater than that. It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"

The peril was past for a little time. But the conflict had weakened him still further. The temptation came in another form.

"Son of God," the voice said, "so you may be. But who will believe you? Men will not take your word for it. Jump off a pinnacle of the temple; that will convince them if they see that God will not let you be harmed."

It was true. Who would believe his report? Down at the Jordan he had heard men calling him the carpenter from Nazareth. "But, no! The Son of God dare not win men like that. It is written, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'"

The days had passed. He had climbed to one of the mountain peaks that overlook the Jordan. To his vivid imagination the whole world lay before him. There is Jerusalem in the west; beyond those eastern hills lies the great empire of Babylon; the desert at the south stretches to the gates of Egypt; and yonder the sun gleams on Herod's marble palace, symbol of the might of Rome.

Babylon and Rome and Egypt, each had conquered by the sword. Would the way of love and peace make Jerusalem greater than them all? Love's way would be long, would be perilous, and life was as short as the Jordan that danced its little, shining way to its grave in the Dead Sea. The fight was long, how long no one knows; and fierce, how fierce none can tell. Jesus conquered at last.

"It is written, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

The Saviour had answered the call, and he returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.

XXVI

JOHN: THE SON OF THUNDER

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

This is one way of meeting a problem which sometimes arises. There is a long story to be told, a story covering many years and many scenes. The real interest of the story is psychological. It is a study in the development of character. But children are not interested in the study of character as such; their interest is in watching the outward expression of character. Now, how are you to build a story of this type except by recording the expression of the development; and that may best be done by watching your character through some one else's eyes. The story told in the first person often presents real difficulties, but in these cases the advantage outweighs the difficulties. For the purpose of this story, you will notice, I have expanded an incident only hinted at in the Gospels, "We saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followed not with us." The story ends in a somewhat abrupt fashion. That was deliberate. It is part of the strategy of story-telling to avoid telling too much. Leave something to the listener's imagination. But if you wanted to make it into a longer story, you could add a scene of the legendary St. John of Ephesus, who from his great chair in the church lifted a white, thin hand and ever repeated, "My little children, love one another."

(A Disciple Tells His Story)

"THE changes Jesus made in you before you knew it; the things you did gladly for his sake that no one could ever have compelled you to do; the way he knew you better than you knew yourself—these were the things that made you sure that he was the Son of God. Yet I do not know any man in whom he made a greater difference than in John, the son of Zebedee.

"He and his brother James lived by the lakeside near my own home, and even in their boyhood days we knew them as boys with whom it was not wise to quarrel. The fierceness of their anger made us all afraid of them. When we heard

that they had become disciples of the Baptist, we were not surprised; for the Baptist, with his talk of sharp axes and winnowing fans and fierce furnaces was likely to appeal to such men as they were. But in a little while they came to the lakeside again, and it was told that they had forsaken the Baptist for a new prophet out of Galilee.

"James and John would not say much of this new prophet, and no one dared ask them, nor even in the after days would they talk of the hours they had spent with him. There are some things of which a man does not speak, even to his intimate friend. They are as precious jewels which a man keeps hidden from the common gaze of men. That year the fishing was good, and we had no time to think about new prophets, but one day there spread a piece of news that made us forget even our great catches of fish. James and John had gone to be disciples of this new prophet from Galilee. They had left their father Zebedee and the hired men, had left nets and boats and gone out after him, with nothing but the cloaks upon their backs. We thought that he had bewitched them and made them mad.

"Later on, when I also heard his call and followed him, I knew what manner of madness it was that had befallen them. Even in those early days I found that Jesus was changing them. Often they accepted meekly things for which in the lakeside days they would have struck a man to the ground; but you saw by the light in their eyes that the old fires still smoldered. They were hot, eager, passionate men; and when the Master, half playfully and half in earnest, called them 'the Sons of Thunder,' we all knew what he meant and felt the truth of it.

"They were not changed in a day as men sometimes were who came to Jesus. Even after they had long been with him their anger would ofttimes flame up like a fire on which

oil has been poured. Of the day when the men of a Samaritan village refused to allow us to rest there for a night, and John wanted the Master to call down fire from heaven and destroy them, I have told you before.

"Then I remember another day. The Master had sent us ahead into another village while he rested after a long and weary journey. We had scarcely entered the place when we saw a crowd of excited, eager people and drew near to see what was happening. In the midst was a girl with torn clothes and disheveled hair who screamed and rolled upon the ground as the evil spirit that was in her tore and tormented her. We were pushing our way through the crowd, eager to use the power the Master had given us, when two men who had been standing together laid their hands upon the girl and commanded the unclean spirit to come out of her in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

"For a moment we were too much amazed to be able to say anything; we had not thought that any one but ourselves had power to heal in the name of Jesus. But the word of these men also had power, and the girl was healed. The people, too, were filled with wonder and burst into loud cries of joy, praising God for all that had been done. I turned and looked at John. His face was dark as the sky when great storms would sweep down upon the lake, while his eyes looked as though lightnings would flash from them upon any one who opposed him. Before I could lay a hand upon him he had gone up to the men who had done this mighty work and cried out in hot anger:

" 'You follow not with us. You have no right to do works of healing or to cast out devils in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.'

"The light of joy in the men's faces died like a blown-out candle. Some of those who stood by and heard would have

fallen upon John and smote him with their fists had not the men held up their hands and demanded peace.

"'We also have been with him,' they said; 'we, too, have listened to his words and seen the mighty works he does. When we would have followed him, he bade us go home and tell our own friends the things we had heard and seen. We have never attempted any mighty work; but when we saw this child in her distress, it was as if we heard him speaking to us and bidding us cast out the devil in his name. And, behold, the child is healed!'

"By this time the people were so angry with us that we made haste to depart; but even as we did so John warned the men to do no more works of healing in the name of Jesus, and it was only after we had gone that we remembered that we had spoken no word of the message we had been sent to deliver. We came back and told Jesus, the fires still flaming in John's eyes. There was great sorrow in the Master's face as he looked at us. It was easy to see that he was grieved at his heart.

"'You should not have forbidden them,' he said; 'he that is not against us is on our side.'

"That was all; but he made us feel that he would have welcomed those men had he been there. John hung his head and turned away. Something changed in him, I know not what, but I never knew him angry again."

XXVII

HOW JESUS SPENT HIS SABBATH DAY

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

This is a story crowded with incident. But to endeavor to keep attention on full stretch for too long is to court failure. Notice that the story commences quietly. The first appeal is to curiosity. It works up to the incident in the synagogue. But the walk home provides a rest. The healing of Simon's wife's mother recatures interest; then there is another rest; after that the story sweeps up to its climax. But that rhythm is very necessary in a story with several points of interest.

(One of Zebedee's Hired Men Tells the Story)

It was one Sabbath soon after Peter and the others had gone with Jesus that he did the mighty works at which we have been wondering ever since. Though we were fishermen, we kept the Sabbath as carefully as any priest. However full the lake might be of fish, no boat put out on that day. Since sunset the boats had been upon the beach, and the town had been quiet. Even the lamps had been filled and fires lit that no work might be done on the Sabbath. In the early morning we all made our way to the white synagogue where the fruitful vine had been carved in the stone lintel of the doorway. I can see now the long plain building with the high platform in the midst for the rulers and the rabbis and the little lamp burning before the chest which contained the scriptures.

There were benches at that end for the richer people, the merchants and the farmers; poor folk, such as I, stood just inside the door or sat on the floor. The synagogue was crowded, for it was known that Jesus was lodging at the house of Simon Peter. They all came in together, and the ruler sent an officer to ask Jesus to sit at his side. The psalms

and the prayers had ended, and Jesus had just read the scriptures and begun to teach when there was a shrieking cry, a cry so loud that every one started up in fear, and a woman cried out in fear in the gallery of the women. Mad Reuben, who had been long possessed of a devil, had jumped to his feet and was coming up the synagogue to Jesus, crying out:

"Jesus of Nazareth, what business have you with us? Are you come to destroy us?"

Half a dozen of us, Peter among the rest, rose up to lay hold on the madman and thrust him out. But Jesus commanded the man to stand still where he was. He obeyed him. That was the amazing thing to us. Reuben stood still, looking at Jesus as if he could not move.

"Be quiet," Jesus said; and then, as if commanding the devil, he said, "Come out of him."

That broke the spell. Reuben fell to the ground, screaming, tossed to and fro, and twisted himself for a moment. Then he lay still a moment or two longer and after that rose to his feet and looked at Jesus with a smile. There was no need to say anything. Every one knew that the man was healed. Jesus went on and talked to us as if nothing had happened; but when the service ended and our tongues were loosed we were all saying to each other: "What sort of teaching is this? He orders unclean spirits, and they obey him."

Peter asked me to go home with him that day that I might talk to the prophet, but before we reached the house Peter's little lad came running to meet us to tell us that Simon's wife's mother was ill. Our people are often ill with the fevers from the lake.

Jesus left us to hurry on with Peter, but we reached the house soon after he did. Peter was trying to comfort his

wife when we went in, for she was sure that her mother would die.

"Jesus will heal her," Peter kept on saying. "He has healed many who were sick." For all he said she would not be comforted until two or three minutes afterwards when Jesus came down from the upper room.

"She is well," he said; "the fever has left her." Then he sank down upon a couch as one who was wearied with much labor.

It was then that I first thought what was often in my mind afterwards: that Jesus must have given much of himself when he healed those who were brought to him. He rested a while in the heat of the day, then walked a little by the seashore. But the news of what he had done for poor mad Reuben and for Simon's wife's mother must have spread all through the town, for early in the afternoon other sick folk began to come to him. I had not thought that there was so much sickness and suffering in the whole world. I turned as I was about to go into the house and saw a poor woman hurrying down the street with a child in her arms. Tears were running down her face, and she was tripping and stumbling as though her tears had made her half blind.

"Where is the healer?" she cried. "They told me he was at Simon Peter's house. Bid him come quickly, ere my child dies. I fear he is dead already." And when I saw the child's face I also thought he was dead. Jesus came out before I could reply and took the child from his mother and held him in his arms and prayed, and when he gave the child back I saw that the color had come back into the child's face and he was trying to smile. "He will recover," Jesus said. He did not hear the thanks the mother tried to speak; for two men came round the corner of the house just then struggling with a girl who was possessed of an

unclean spirit. From the opposite direction came a blind man, his hand on the shoulder of a man with a withered leg. They also had come for healing. I remembered a shipmate of mine, one Judah, the son of Samuel, who had broken his leg in a great storm one night and had never walked since. He lived near, and I carried him to Jesus on my back, but he walked home, for his leg was healed.

Soon it was difficult to get near, for the people kept coming; others did as I had done, remembered sick ones who had been long forgotten and fetched them. Many were the burdens we carried that day, forgetting all the Sabbath law. It grew toward evening, the sun set, and the darkness fell, and still the people came, and still he healed them. I can see now the light of the torches and the lamps we held for him as he went about and healed them all. No one was turned away unhealed. I have known many Sabbath days, but none like the day when Jesus was here. And though I only fetched a friend upon my shoulders and held a torch for Jesus while he worked, I am glad indeed that I was there."

XXVIII

JESUS THE STORY-TELLER

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

No book on how to tell Bible stories would be complete without a sketch of Jesus the story-teller. The material is very familiar, and nothing has been added to it; only three or four things have been brought a little closer together in time than they are in the chronology of the Gospels. But I think that the evangelists were not over-careful to arrange their material in chronological order. Matthew, for example, collects sayings spoken on many different occasions into one group and gathers a bundle of parables together in similar fashion. I feel that this story is told in just the way in which any one of the lesser known disciples would tell the story of how Jesus interested and captured the poeple by the tales he told them. It is an illustration of the abundance of material there is for story-tellers in the common things of the common day if only we have eyes to see. All the material of the parables of Jesus was in the common knowledge of the people. They knew younger sons who had run away from home and played the fool. It was not unusual for people to be robbed and left for dead down the Jericho road. Jesus may himself have helped to build the greater barns of the rich fool. The Master has left us a wonderful example in the way he gathered story material.

(A Disciple Tells His Story)

"We had little time to be alone in those days, for the Master was very popular. The common people heard him gladly because he loved so much to talk of the common things. Even now I can hear them laughing as he told them of the man who tried to swallow a camel when he had carefully strained out a tiny fly from his cup, and see the women smiling and nodding as he talked about baking bread and mending clothes. He always made you feel that he knew all about you and the special troubles that came your way.

"We who were of the twelve whom he had chosen were almost always with him. But there were many who stayed

with him only for a little while. Often some man whom he had healed would follow him for a few days, telling every one of the great things Jesus had done for him, but the Master would never allow them to follow him long. He would bid them go home to their friends and their kindred to tell them of all they had heard and seen. Then there were those who are ready to follow every new teacher who would come after him. Jesus knew their hearts, and when he told of the hardness of his way they turned back and walked no more with him.

"And there were some who would follow him for a day or two who could not follow longer because of household ties. There were some honorable women. Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward at Cana, was one such. Jesus had journeyed thirty miles to heal her only son; and ever afterwards, when we were near Cana, she would have us at her house. When we left she would ride on ahead with her servants and at some shady place, when noonday came, we would find them waiting with a meal prepared. Those were happy days that we spent by the wayside with Jesus, for none of us dreamed then how it would all end, nor did we heed the Master when he told us.

"Everywhere the people thronged us. Men left the fields and women their work, even the children left their games in the market places to listen to him, and we were never long without seeing some one who was sick or lame brought to him for healing. But it was his stories of which I would tell you. The most ordinary thing would serve him for material out of which to make a story. He would see a woman sweeping a house in the dusk with a lighted lamp in her hand or greet some pearl merchant by the wayside. And before long he would have made a story about them, stories

such as you could never forget, and when you had heard you were always finding some new meaning in them.

"I remember that one day we were by the shore of Galilee. You remember how the hills slope down to the water? On one of the hills a man was sowing corn. None of us had noticed him. If we had done so, we should not have looked a second time. But his moving figure caught the Master's eye. He threw out his hand and called us to look at him. It was just an ordinary hillside field such as you have seen a thousand times. It was unfenced, and a footpath ran across it from corner to corner. The soil was thin. Here and there you could see the rocks pushing through the ground. In one place an old thorn patch that had never been rooted up was already thrusting strong green shoots through the brown earth. No one but the Master would have seen a story in that.

"When we had been watching a minute or more and noticed the long strides the man was taking and the steady swing of his arm as he scattered the seed to right and left, Jesus went on again. 'You see what is happening,' he said; 'see how some grains are falling on the footpath, and the birds are snatching them up.' I do not think we had noticed the birds before then. Sparrows and larks were dipping and wheeling about the man as he worked, calling and chattering as birds will. On the plowed land the seed fell into all manner of tiny places and was soon hidden. The birds could see it on the hard ground and soon devoured it.

"'Some is falling on the thin soil by the rocks,' he went on. 'In this weather it will be showing green in a few days. But as soon as we get any heat it will wither.' A man alongside me, whose clothes smelt of the earth, muttered to himself: 'They told me he was a carpenter. He should have been a farmer.' I turned to tell him that the Master

knew the ways of every living thing, but before I could speak Jesus had gone on again. 'Did you see that? Some of the seed from that handful fell among the thorns. The seed will never have a chance there. The thorns will spring up and choke it. You cannot grow wheat in a thorn patch.'

"'He should have dug up the thorns properly,' the man beside me muttered. 'Yet it is good ground, most of the field,' Jesus said. 'He'll need more than a basket to bring home his harvest. The increase will be some thirty, some sixty, some a hundredfold. My word is like that, too. It brings forth fruit in good soil.'

"He was always teaching like that. You do not wonder that people crowded to hear him and that you could never forget all he said."

XXIX

LEVI THE PUBLICAN

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

In this story I have made use of an old tradition that Levi was a member of the family of Jesus, "the black sheep of the family." And it seems intrinsically probable that Jesus and Levi had seen something of each other and had had some dealings with one another before that hour when Levi left all to follow him. If that were so, would it not be probable that the presence of Jesus in his office, the realization of Jesus' faith in Levi when every one else despised and hated him, would have the effect of calling up the better, half-forgotten side of Levi's nature and so begin that longing which was later to make Levi—Matthew—not only a disciple, but an evangelist. Imagination must not overstep the bounds of probability.

JUST where the great white road from Damascus, the Way of the Sea, skirted the northeastern shore of the lake and entered Capernaum there stood a little, long, white building, a customs house, with the gilded eagle standard of Rome before its door to proclaim the imperial authority and rule. Here sat Levi the publican, surrounded by clerks and servants, that he might levy taxes upon all that came into or went out of the city. And if it should be that he collected more than was justly due, three or four times as much, perhaps, as would ever reach Cæsar at Rome, well, that was a privilege for which he had paid a great price, too great a price to be reckoned only in terms of money.

So here every merchant unfastened his bags and every traveler opened his bales and with much disputing and many curses paid such taxes as Levi chose to demand. It was no wonder that men impatient with delay and angry at injustice spat to show their contempt of such a man and called him "dog," and "thief," and "traitor," and even worse things

to his face. But even that is something to which a man may grow accustomed, and Levi only shrugged his shoulders and next time made the tax a little heavier to make men suffer for the harm they did. That is, until one day when Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth, stepped into his office. Peter was on his way to pay the taxes levied on the fish he caught, and as he went Jesus went with him.

"I should like to see Levi again," he said. "I knew him when he was a lad."

"It would have been good if he had never been born," Peter snarled. "Is it not a shameful thing that a man should rob his own kindred and serve the hated Romans as Levi does?"

"He was a goodly lad," Jesus insisted, "kindly and generous of heart."

"What of that?" Peter cried. "Look at him now!"

"Doth a pearl lose all its wealth because it falls in the mud, Peter? Is not a flower still beautiful though it has been broken and flung in the dust?"

Peter was out of his depth and made no reply. He could not understand Jesus defending such a man. Nor could he understand it when they entered the tax collector's office and Jesus greeted Levi in familiar, friendly fashion and reminded him of happy days of the boyhood of long ago. Matthew was equally amazed. It was so long since anyone had spoken kindly to him. Something choking in his throat made utterance difficult. He almost wished that Jesus had spoken roughly and contemptuously as others did.

Another man came in while they were there, a man with unwashed face and rough beard, his heavy brown clothes smelling strongly of fish and bark-tanned nets. He went to Matthew and knelt before him, bowing his forehead to the ground.

"Have patience with me, have patience, and I will pay thee all," he pleaded.

"Patience, have not I had long patience with thee? If the debt is not paid by noon, I will cast thee into prison."

"But, lord, I can only pay the tax by selling my nets, and if I sell my nets I can no longer earn my bread."

Levi looked down at him. He was an idle, shiftless fellow. He was about to bid the man begone and sell his nets when he looked round and saw the eyes of Jesus resting full upon his face. It was as though Levi read there something he had forgotten. When next he spoke his tone was quiet.

"Get you gone. I will have patience yet a little while."

The man kissed the hem of Levi's robe in gratitude and shuffled off, and Levi looked across to see Jesus smiling at him. Peter went down the road with the Master filled with wonder.

"A publican had patience," he exclaimed. "The next thing will be that a hungry wolf will drop the lamb it has carried off. Or a mountain lion leave a kid unharmed."

After that it was not an uncommon thing to see Levi the publican somewhere on the edge of the crowd who listened to Jesus, sometimes in places far enough away from Capernaum. They grew accustomed to seeing Levi's eager face and questioning eyes, and if afterwards he walked alone with Jesus no one wondered much. For Jesus was constantly saying that tax gatherers and outcasts had a place in the kingdom of God.

They had been many days in Capernaum and once more were making their way along the Way of the Sea. They came to the toll place and found the usual bustle and confusion about the door. Jesus greeted Matthew in the customary fashion, then added with more authority than was usual in his tones, "Follow me!"

Levi looked at him for a moment. It was partly the look of one surprised, but still more it was the look of one who, hearing something he had been waiting for, is yet somewhat puzzled to understand. Then he smiled, and there was deep understanding in his eyes. He turned to his assistants, spent a few minutes in making some arrangements with them, then went out along the road with Jesus.

The news of what had happened spread through Capernaum like fire spread after a long drought. It captured every man's thought and interest, interest that was quickened when it was known that Levi had made a great feast to his assistants and his fellow publicans. A crowd of curious onlookers made their way to the great square house that overlooked the lake, and it soon became known that Jesus was the guest of honor.

It had been amazing that Matthew should leave house and business, wealth and lands to follow Jesus; but that a rabbi should be a guest of such a man was more surprising still. Dignified scribes and proud Pharisees for whom the crowd made a respectful way passed through the courtyard and looked in at door and window to see for themselves. Had they not seen they would never have believed. "A friend of publicans and sinners."

XXX

COURAGE IN THE STORM

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

This is a very brief story and is the story of a single incident. So it works up to a single climax. You suggest the disciples' fear from the first—the storm, threatening, developing, overwhelming, supplies the thread of interest, while the abrupt ending creates just that sense of reverent wonder which you are anxious to create.

"MASTER, thou art wearied, and the people throng thee. Let us send them away!" John stood close at Jesus' side and took hold of his arm as though he would drag him out of the crowd.

"Nay, John, not yet. There is a little lad yonder whom an evil spirit torments. We must work the works of him that sent me while it is day. The night cometh."

At last the little lad was healed, and Jesus wiped the sweat from a face that was white with weariness. He went down the beach and climbed on board the boat.

"Let us cross over to the other side," he said.

The disciples looked at one another and then glanced up at the sky that even now was dark and threatening with storm clouds. There was no answer for a moment and no preparation to leave. Jesus looked over his shoulder to see what was happening and read in their faces the unspoken question. He smiled very wearily. The long day's teaching and healing had worn him out. "Is it not written, He holdeth the sea in the hollow of his hand?"

They cast off from the shore in a little broad-beamed ship, with the long furled sail hanging awkwardly on the single mast, got out the great oars, and began rowing with slow, heavy strokes. The wind from the hills was against them,

and to row that heavy boat in a choppy sea was no easy task. They thought of the seven miles or so before them and wished themselves safe on the other side.

Before they had gone far other boats were pushed down the beach and manned and launched, for there were many who were eager to see Jesus work other miracles, and there were some who were anxious to hear what he would say.

Jesus went up into the bow of the boat where a little deck supplied a shelter where three or four men might lie and, with a fisherman's old coat for a pillow, lay down and in a moment or two was soundly asleep. The oars clicked in the sockets of the bulwarks of the boat, and the great yard creaked against the mast as the wind caught them, while from time to time the little, white-topped waves slapped heavily against the sides of the boat or broke over the bows in a drenching shower of spray.

Midnight came and passed, and the moon rose, but only now and then were they able to catch a glimpse of it. The heavy storm clouds, black as night, hid both moon and stars except for rare intervals. The winds howled dismally in the gorges of the hills that were like giant funnels, and occasionally a sudden gust would almost sweep them out of their course. Panting heavily, they tried to put even greater strength into their rowing, fearing the sudden, perilous storms for which Galilee is famous.

The clouds grew heavier and more menacing. The roar and howl of the wind became wilder and deeper, and at last, with an awful roar that almost deafened them the storm burst. Their only hope was to keep the little boat head-on to the waves that now towered above them like mountains and fell upon the ship with a noise as of crashing rocks. The storms seldom lasted long, and if they could ride the waves they would be safe.

"Let us wake the Master," some one suggested.

"No," John panted, as he tugged at his oar. "He is wearied to death and can do no good."

Just at that moment an oar snapped and the rower fell backward into the water that now half filled the little boat. The confusion was over in a moment, but that moment had been sufficient to put the boat at the mercy of the waves. She swung round broadside on the waves that now poured all their vast weight of waters over her sides. In a minute or two the ship would fill, and they would all perish.

Peter rushed forward to where Jesus was lying asleep and, clutching him by the shoulder, shouted, "Master, Master, carest thou not that we perish?" He was awake in an instant and stood up and realized at once the plight and the peril they were in. He raised his hand.

"Peace! Be still!"

And immediately there was a great calm.

He looked round upon the disciples, from whose faces the fear had not yet had time to vanish.

"O, ye of little faith, wherefore did ye doubt?"

They said nothing. There was nothing to say. But as they baled out the water and rowed the ship's head round again to reach the other side and watched the storm clouds break so that the moon and stars shone through, they said to one another beneath their breath, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and seas obey him?"

XXXI

HOW PETER FOUND HIS HERO

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

Here is a story clearly divided into scenes for ease of retelling. As an example of the story-teller's art notice the quiet, subdued atmosphere created by the manner of telling the earlier scenes, in contrast with the rapid pace of the last scene. Notice how the suggestion of excitement and speed is created by the use of a series of short sentences and words which suggest movement. The pace of the story must fit the subject matter. Think through these scenes till you can see them for yourself; then it will not be difficult to make others see them.

A Welcome Friend

Everything had gone awry that night. The fish had seemed to play tricks with even the wisest and most fortunate fishermen on the lake. The bright sun that rose upon the hills mocked their heavy hearts and their tired bodies. Somehow the boat had never seemed as heavy as now when they were bringing it home empty. The sun shone upon the dew-drenched fields and on the heavy foliage of the vineyards; it danced over the rippling waves and turned the drops of water that fell from their oars into sparkling jewels; it woke the little towns that were dotted so thickly about the shore into newness of life, but it brought no joy into the hearts of the men in the empty boat.

"Lads, have you caught anything?"

The call came clear across the water in the still air. They were rowing with their backs to the shore and were too disheartened even to turn and look. They took it for granted that the call came from some merchant from Tiberias or Capernaum. Wearily they shook their heads. A despondent voice cried, "We have toiled all night and have taken nothing."

A few more strokes, and the bow of the boat grounded on the shelving beach. Something familiar in a figure on the shore captured their attention. Peter jumped out and splashed through the rippling water.

"Rabbi Jesus!" he cried excitedly, then turned to call the others to hurry after him. Peter and Andrew and the sons of Zebedee had talked so much about this Jesus of Nazareth that the people about the shore had come to feel that they also knew him. And stories had come round the lake of strange things which he had said and mighty works which he had done in other places.

The excitement spread along the shore. Men left their nets and their way to the fields; women flocked from their little, square, white houses, and tax gatherers left their booths and crowded about the place where Jesus was standing until he was almost pushed into the sea. Brown headcloths and green ones, blue robes and orange robes, well-dressed merchants and ill-clad fishermen all were packed together like a tight bunch of many-colored flowers.

A Borrowed Boat

"Lend me your boat, Peter," Jesus said.

The four fishermen eagerly climbed into the boat and pushed it off a yard or so, so that only the bow was on the beach, and made a little pile of dry nets on which Jesus could sit and teach. They sat at the back and looked with pride on the people who had gathered, proud that they had been the first to discover Jesus, proud that they could call themselves his friends. A great silence fell upon the crowd as soon as Jesus began to speak, for he did not speak, as other rabbis did, of a God who was angry all the day long with all who did not offer costly sacrifices and keep impossible laws. Jesus talked about all sorts of common things,

of birds and flowers, of the way the seed grows in the field, and the way women make bread. He talked to men of the way they loved their children and worked for them.

"Why are you afraid to come to God?" Jesus said. "He is your Heavenly Father. If you love working for your children and giving them the best you have, how much more will your Father in heaven give you what you need?"

At last Jesus stood up as a sign that the teaching was ended. He reminded them that the morning was growing late and there were tasks waiting to be done in home and field and on the shore, and the people slowly moved away, talking of their great Rabbi who spake as no other man spake.

A Great Catch

Jesus stood looking out over the lake, his white robes shining in the light, shading his eyes with his hand. After a moment or two he turned round and called Peter, "Push out into deep waters and lower your nets, and you will have a catch."

Since Jesus had come Peter had forgotten all his anxiety and care over the wasted labor of the night. Now it came back with a rush. He thought that Jesus had forgotten.

"Rabbi, we toiled all night and took nothing; nevertheless at thy word—" For there was something in the look on Jesus' face which made Peter feel that he could not refuse the command.

The ropes creaked as the heavy sail was hoisted. The heavy oars splashed in the water. Jesus the teacher was forgotten. They were just fishermen eager for a great catch. The boat drove through the water like a living thing. You could not believe that it was the same boat which had been so heavy that morning when they came home. Peter and the others could see now what Jesus had

seen. The water was solid with moving, leaping fish. Eager cries rang out to the accompaniment of the splashing oars. Nets were cast out, flung wide, drawn in again; surely all the fish in the lake must be in that net. Ropes strained and cracked. The boat heeled over till it threatened to overturn.

"Come and help! Come and help! The burden is too heavy for us."

Another boat came to share the burden, but even so, the boats were almost sinking. Thrilling with excitement, the fishermen jumped out as the boats reached the shore. Once more there was time to think of Jesus, to whom they owed everything. Peter saw him standing there to welcome them. He flung himself down on the wet stones, spread his hands, and put his face upon them.

"Unworthy, Lord, unworthy! Depart from me, for I am a sinful man."

Jesus stooped down and raised him up. The smile on the Master's face banished all Peter's fears.

"Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

Peter had found his hero.

XXXII

THE FEAST OF LIGHTS

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

I have inserted this story as an example of Bible-story-telling of a somewhat unusual character. The "little story" is having a considerable literary vogue just now. In writing and telling these "Little Bible Stories," I have developed a phrase or a saying rather than an incident. Jesus' description of himself as "the light of the world" greatly deepens in meaning if it is set against the background of the ceremonial of the feast of lights. Material for such studies is almost inexhaustible. Paul's little picture of "the sin that is like an entangling garment about our feet" (Heb. 12: 1) suggests the picture of the Isthmian games and some runner who was too proud to lay aside the long garment of the street. "The shadow of a great rock" (Isa. 32: 2) pictures the little group of desert travelers exhausted by the heat, who throw themselves down in the cool dimness of some mighty rock that has thrust itself above the waste of sand. Psalm 23 is a whole gallery of such pictures, "The valley of the shadow," where evil beasts may lurk in the thick coverts or robbers hide in the deep caves and the shepherd goes before with rod and staff to guard the flock. Think of the hour when the waters were beginning to rise and the sheep were in peril of being swept off their feet by the swirling waters and hear the Sheherd of Israel promise, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee" (Isa. 43: 2). And what dark experience may have lain behind the Master's word, "The hireling fleeth, and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep" (John 10: 12). Had he known some hireling shepherd who had deserted the flock? This is a fruitful field where few have gathered.

People envied Bildad when he pushed his way through the crowds. Men envied him his youth and the health that was like a bloom upon his cheeks. He looked a man who, with many years before him, would find all of them very good. He was obviously wealthy. Garments of deep green silk edged with fur were not for common people, and hands as soft and white as his had never learned to toil. Men had been sold in the market for less than he had paid for the

elaborately stitched shoes of red morocco on his feet. There was unashamed envy in the eyes of the people who looked after him, envy that made some who watched him curl their lips in bitterness because he had so much.

He made his way into the temple courts where rabbis and teachers sat in deep alcoves with groups of pupils about them arguing and debating minor matters of the law. Bildad paused at group after group, hoping to find some subject being discussed that would relieve the boredom of his mind. Now and then he interjected a remark or asked a question that set the group ablaze like a smoldering torch thrown into dry stubble. But the fire burned itself out as quickly as the stubble would do, and with a shrug of the shoulders he passed on. Why was it that life was so utterly empty of interest? Nothing seemed able to hold one's mind for long. What was the use of debating whether a tailor who left his needle stuck in his coat carried a burden on the Sabbath day or no?

A group much larger than the rest caught his wandering attention, and Bildad made his way across the crowded temple court toward it. The Rabbi who was teaching was surprisingly young. He could be little older than Bildad himself. As he came near he heard a loud ripple of laughter run through the listening group. That was curious. It was rare to hear laughter while a rabbi taught. He elbowed a way through till he could see the teacher more clearly. He looked strangely alive, as though some light from above shone directly on to his face, and as he moved Bildad noticed with some surprise that the blue-and-white robe he wore was without the knotted fringe that was the special mark of the rabbi's office.

"You need new hearts for the new law," he was saying. "If you put new wine into old wineskins, you know what

will happen." Men looked at each other and nodded. This was teaching they were well able to understand. "Who would have thought that such a prophet could have come out of Nazareth?" some one asked close at his elbow. Bildad looked at him now with new interest. This must be Jesus of Nazareth, of whom people were talking so much. It was not surprising that people talked so much of him if this was the fashion of his teaching. When he moved away Bildad felt as though he had bathed in some spring which had magic power to make all things new for him.

That evening the feast of lights was held. The temple courts were crowded with an eager, expectant host. This was one of the great days of the feast. Bildad came to see the spectacle. But in his heart there was an unconfessed longing that he might once more see and hear the prophet from Nazareth. Boredom and weariness had vanished since he had listened to him that morning. The swift Eastern twilight was falling rapidly. It was already dark in the narrow valleys that lay below the city hill, and across on the wooded slopes of Olivet the camp fires that, awhile before, had been dim smudges of gray smoke were now changing into glowing, twinkling points of light. The light still lingered on the top of the hill, and the glow of the sunset shone upon the tanned faces of the people and made the white robes of the waiting priests stand out with strange distinctness. The sunset fires died down, leaving only pale lines of opal light far down the horizon. At last these also died away.

The people turned their gaze skyward and watched the first star appear; presently it was joined by two others. The appearing of three stars in the evening sky was the signal for the lighting of the lamps. At a word from the priest the lamps on the two great, seven-branched candle-

sticks were lit, giving a light which bathed the faces of the people in a golden glory; a light which, the people said, shone to the farthest corners of the city.

The lights multiplied as worshipers who had come prepared lit torches from the same lamps and joined in an intricate ceremonial dance. This feast was their perpetual reminder that by a pillar of cloud in the daytime and by a pillar of fire in the night God had led his people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

The celebration had scarcely begun when there was a dramatic interruption. Bildad turned to see the Rabbi Jesus from Nazareth standing in an elevated place where the torchlight shone conspicuously upon him. "I am the light of the world," Jesus cried. "He that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." The dancing and the clamor ceased for a moment. Men looked at Jesus, wondering vaguely what so strange a statement could mean, then gave it up as something beyond their understanding, and the feast went on again.

But Bildad and many another stood and looked at Jesus as he stood with the light behind him and about him, looking as though the light was indeed in him and shone from him. It was as it had been with him that morning when he seemed to give fullness of life to all who listened to him. Bildad thought of his own life, a life in which so many lights had been lit, lights as brilliant as these which shone in the temple courts. But they had all died down and flickered out. "A living light, a light of life," a light that would neither flicker nor fade. That would indeed be a treasure beyond price. He wondered.

"Then spake Jesus unto them again, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8: 12.)

XXXIII

THE SHEPHERD'S STORY

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

This is another example of how a story told in meager outline may be expanded and made interesting. The process demands a combination of imagination and study of the background of the story. Imagination may be cultivated even in those who feel their equipment is slender, and background material is provided abundantly by writers of lesson helps. This story is largely a monologue, and the peril of the monologue is that it becomes monotonous. The story-teller has to avoid that peril by variations of voice and gesture and by emphasizing the progress of the story. Here, for example, there is the progress from the description of Blackface's character to the discovery of his loss, then to the search, on to the discovery and recovery. The last few sentences, "They told me that I had done a foolish thing," etc., provide an opportunity for the story-teller to learn the dramatic value of the pause. Make a break between the telling of these sentences and see how much interest is added.

The heat of the day was almost unbearable. Sheep lay huddled wherever there was a patch of shade from bush or rock and panted heavily, though the river ran near and they had drunk long and deep. The leaves on the trees hung limp and lifeless as though no moisture or strength was left in them, and the stream flowed so sluggishly that it scarcely seemed to move while the air danced and quivered above it. Everything was so still that you could hear the quick panting of the exhausted sheep and the clicking calls of the insects in the grass. The shepherd lay on his back, with his heavy cloak cast aside, in the thin shade of a bushy tree, only his thin inner vest covering him. By his side lay stretched out a tall village lad in his early teens, whose sturdy limbs and keen, clever face had been bronzed with the sun and whose hands had grown hard with labor. His well-knit body showed through the thin cotton tunic of

striped blue and white which barely reached his knees, and his legs were bare to the sandals about his feet.

The boy looked with admiration into the tanned, bearded face of Dan the shepherd that was draped in a green head cloth, played curiously with the heavy, knotted club that lay on the grass between them, and envied the shepherd his tall, straight staff, polished at the top with much handling and rough and battered at the base with hard usage.

"Would that I also might have been a shepherd," the lad sighed. "It would have been better far to live with sheep and birds and trees in the open air, as you do, Dan, than to toil at planing and sawing in a carpenter's shop."

"I am not so sure," the shepherd replied. "It is not all a matter of lying in the shade on summer afternoons. I could tell you stories of some of those sheep of mine that would make you glad that your lot has been cast in a carpenter's shop: tales of lions and wolves, of sick lambs and straying sheep."

Dan paused, but the lad made no reply. He knew that there was nothing better than to let the old shepherd tell his stories in his own way without interrupting him.

"You see old Blackface there," the shepherd lifted his staff to point out a particular sheep which looked older and more ragged than any of the others. "If ever I have a sheep astray, he is sure to be the mising one. If we are on the march, he is always stopping and lagging behind or is wandering from the way in search of something which attracts him. Many is the stone I have had to drop behind him from my sling to remind him that he was alone and disobedient. Then he would hurry up and run with the others, but in a little while he would be straying again. Yet for all the trouble he causes me I think I love him more than any other

sheep in the flock. I would rather lose any of them than lose him."

The old shepherd looked longingly across at the sheep, and Blackface, as though he knew his master was talking about him, raised his head and looked across in reply.

"He is always the last sheep in and the first sheep out of the fold," Dan resumed, "and one winter night when the darkness fell early and lions and wolves were prowling and calling because they were hungry, when I counted the flock as they passed under the rod at the door of the fold I found that one sheep was missing. Even before I went through the flock I knew that it would be Blackface who had gone astray. It was so dark that even with a lantern a man could scarcely see the ground beneath his feet, and it rained as though the windows of heaven were opened. Even so, there was nothing to be done but to go and search for him. I left the sheep in the fold in charge of another shepherd and set out straightway.

"I went back along the way we had come, calling Blackface by name and listening, listening and calling, but I could hear nothing above the roar of the wind and the rush of the waters except the echo of my own voice and now and then the roar of a lion seeking his meat from God. I searched under the rocks and pushed my staff into the bushes. I could not find him anywhere. I came at last to the place where we had rested at noonday, knowing that Blackface had been with me then. Now I began to fear that he had fallen over the mountain side along which we had come and had been killed. The moon rose as I turned to go back, and I could see a little. The rain was still falling, and the waters were rushing down the mountains, and I feared that I might be washed away.

"I still called him and beat the bushes with my staff, but

it was all in vain. My heart was heavy, fearing that Blackface was dead. At last, in a place where the way is most narrow and the hillside most steep, I heard a faint bleat. I feared that it was only my imagination or some trick of the wind. But when I listened I heard it again. It was a place where the mountain side dropped down to a little river, a place where a man must hold on by his knees and his eyebrows even in the daylight and no place for a man to venture down by moonlight. I called Blackface by name, and he answered me because he knew my voice. I knew how frightened he would be, and I feared that he might slip down and be killed.

"So I began to climb down. I found foothold in clefts of the rock here and there, and sometimes I was helped by a bush or a small tree. But more than once I slipped and feared I should have fallen to the bottom. I could not see where Blackface was, but I was guided by his cry, for he would answer me when I called. At last I reached the place. He had fallen over the cliff and had been caught in a thick bush, but he was too frightened to move. It was almost dawn now, and I could see a little where I was. I managed to get him on my shoulders, but I had to hold him there with one hand while I climbed up with the other. But now that the rain had ceased and the light was clearer, I could climb safely. I reached the fold just as the other shepherds were preparing to set out to search for me. They told me that I had done a foolish thing. It may be that they were right. I know not. I only know that the joy in my heart was so great that I wanted all men to share it."

"There he is now," the old shepherd looked across at the grazing sheep and gave a peculiar call. Instantly the sheep answered and ran across and looked into Dan's face as though he understood the shepherd's love. Perhaps he did.

XXXIV

THE LEPER WHO VENTURED

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

Notice in this story how the interest is gradually worked up to the thrilling climax. The leper is in the story from the beginning, and his pitiable plight is suggested, rather than depicted, by the contrast with the flowers. Sympathy is created for him without frightening children with horrors. The healing of the little child prepares the way for the more dramatic incident of the maniac, then the leper, who has been on the edge of the field of interest, dashes into the center of it. Children will share the joy the "unknown disciple" feels as they feel the sun more bright and the flowers more lovely because a leper had been healed.

(An Unknown Disciple Tells the Story)

It had been a quiet, peaceful day. We had been journeying through a country where few people lived. At least, those whom we met were few: a shepherd leading his flock to some fresh pasture, a farmer with a laden donkey journeying to some near-by market, two or three women by a wayside well; I think no others. The Master had been very quiet as we journeyed, like one who has many things upon his mind which he must make clear to himself before he can speak of them to others. So we had talked much together, quietly and happily, for the thrill and the joy of the first days were upon us. It was afterwards, when we all dreamed of the kingdom, that we grew angry and jealous of one another.

We saw the leper first a little way outside the village, just such a distance as lepers were expected to keep away. He was standing alone far up the hillside, that made us think a little more about him than we might have done, for usually these men get together in little companies. Driven out

from the face of men, they cling together in a common misery and grief. We heard the sound of his clapper and bell as he moved away and looked up at him. It was early springtime, soon after the latter rain had ceased, and the land was full of flowers, cyclamen and tulips and anemones covering the ground with such a carpet of color as not even Solomon had in all his house. The leper standing there in his rags, with his wounds smelling in the sun, looked the more pitiable for the beauty of the world around him. I would have called him if I had dared, but the Master kept these things in his own power. Jesus looked up at him, but made no sign, and the leper came no nearer.

However, he continued to follow us, keeping at a great distance as the law commanded, and one could hear the cracked jangling of his bell as he moved. Some one who knew the Master must have gone to the people and told them that he was coming, for at the entrance of the village the people came to meet us, bringing all the sick folk in the place. A rough, unwashed man whom no one would ever have thought could be tender came with a little, white-faced child in his arms. He pushed his way along—the people might have been so many flowers in the tall grass for the way he brushed them aside—came right up to Jesus and, without a word, put the child in his arms. The Master smiled to see the strong man's eagerness and faith. He held the child tenderly for a moment or two, talked very quietly to her, until the little thing, who had seemed too weak to cry or move, roused up and put her arms about his neck and kissed him as though she would thank him for healing her, and then turned and held out her arms to her father. The big man laughed then, a laugh so full of joy that the hills seemed to echo it, and with a word of thanks to Jesus he

strode away through the crowd again, laughing for joy because his child was whole.

The people stood watching him for a moment; then they turned about and prepared to scatter as great, terrible cries rang out and three men came round the corner of the road, struggling with a maniac whom they could scarcely hold. The people were afraid that he would break away, but their eagerness to see what Jesus would do next kept them there. Jesus went to meet the demented man, laid his hands upon his shoulders, and looked into his eyes. In a moment or two his howls and cries died away. He looked up at Jesus and began to tremble and then to cry softly like a little child who is sorry for some wrong thing he has done. Jesus spake to him quietly, telling him that he had nothing to fear, that his Father in heaven would care for him. The tears soon dried. Those who had brought him had taken their hands away and left him free. The man looked down at himself, saw his few rags of clothes and his filthy limbs, and blushed as though he were ashamed.

We were still listening to Jesus, and none of us had noticed that the lonely leper who had been following us had now come near. A woman looked up and saw him scrambling down the hillside, forgetful of bell and clapper, forgetting even to cry "Unclean!" There was no need for him to cry. The woman who had seen him first screamed, snatched up her child, and fled, screaming. The others straightway followed her example. Some of the men picked up stones to fling at him and shouted to him to go back. The leper paid no heed, but came scrambling toward us.

"Let him come," Jesus said. The men dropped their stones, muttering and murmuring at the peril, and scattered, leaving a great, clear space about the Master. When he got down to the road the leper limped along to where Jesus

was waiting for him. The clapper, hanging from his wrist in a leather loop, clattered as he tried to raise his hands in greeting, and the bell at his waist jangled dismally as he moved. He was so worn out and breathless with eagerness and excitement that he could scarcely speak. Jesus waited for him to recover himself a little. At last the words came: "Lord—if thou wilt—thou canst make—me clean."

I wish I could make you hear how he said that word "me." It was as though he were the most hopeless of all the lepers who had ever been or who ever would be. He seemed so confident and yet was so afraid. "Lord—if thou wilt," he murmured again when Jesus made no reply, and he fell on his knees in the dust.

Jesus put out his hand and touched the leper. Think of it. It was against the law and against all reason. He could have healed him without touching him. I had to turn my head away for a moment. It made me feel sick to see the Master touching a leper—and such a leper. Jesus said something softly that I did not hear. When I turned round again the leper had staggered to his feet. He stretched out his hand and looked at himself and then at Jesus. His mouth moved as though he tried to speak, but no words came. Then he dropped to his knees again and pressed his lips against Jesus' sandals. Jesus raised him to his feet and smiled at him. "Go and show thyself to the priests," he said, "and do the things appointed by the law."

The man turned to go through the people who now were beginning to come back again. Jesus called him.

"Do not say too much to others about it," he said.

The man moved away, and I stood and watched him. The sun was bright and the flowers more lovely now, for I knew that a whole man and not a leper walked within those tattered clothes. I thought of those who loved him and of

all they would say when he came back healed, those who had mourned him as one dead, and I was glad that I had followed Jesus of Nazareth. Even as I watched, others were coming, waiting to be healed.

XXXV

THE WITHERED ARM HEALED

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

By way of contrast in method, here is a story in which the story-teller plunges into the action of the story with the first sentence. Eyes and voice and attitude must all suggest the excited eagerness of the healed man. It is not as easy to maintain interest by this method, perhaps. But you can do much by suggesting the shocked horror of the questioning neighbors at the breaking of the Sabbath law and the contrast between their hushed voices as they scarcely dared to put the question and Neri's eager, enthusiastic defense.

"Sarah, Sarah, come! See my arm. It is whole again!" The loud, glad cry that was full of wonder filled the little street while Neri was still some distance from his house, so that not only Sarah, but the neighbors also, came hurrying out, breaking the quiet peace of the Sabbath day.

"My arm is healed!" he cried again and put it closely round his wife in proof of his new strength. He stooped and, picking up his little son, Joash, held him high above his head in both hands and laughed aloud for very joy. Heedless of all who clamored that he should tell them how it all happened, Neri ran into the little shop beside the house, where the cobwebs had grown about the neglected tools, and, picking up hammer and chisel, he began to chip away at a half-finished corner stone. "My arm is whole!" he cried to the neighbors, who filled the little shop and stood about the open sides.

Still holding hammer and chisel, fidgeting with them in his eagerness to be at work again, Neri looked round on the crowd of eager faces.

"It was Jesus the prophet from Nazareth," he said. "I heard that he was coming, and all men know of the mighty

works he has done, and I thought that maybe if he saw me with my withered arm he might heal me also."

"But it was the Sabbath day," some one said in a voice in which wonder was mingled with something very like fear.

Neri smiled. "Well I know it. Have patience, and you shall hear how it all happened. I heard that he was coming with his disciples, and I went out to meet him as he came by way of the fields. Others went also, for the Pharisees have those who spy on him continually, if haply they may find some cause of offense in him. As they came through the fields his disciples plucked the ears of corn and rubbed them in their hands and began to eat them."

"Yet the rabbis have said," the shocked voice interrupted again, "that such a deed is both threshing and winnowing and so a breaking of the greater law."

"I know it," Neri answered impatiently, "and the spies of the Pharisees told him so that he might rebuke his disciples. He told them that their Sabbath laws were only small and foolish customs which did men harm. 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath,' he said; and before they could answer anything he added, 'The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath Day.'"

"What said they?" some one asked eagerly.

"What could they say? They looked at him as though they would have killed him, for he had humbled them in the sight of all the people, but they said nothing. So we came into the synagogue, and they pushed me forward so that I was near him, for they wondered whether he would heal me on the Sabbath day. When he sat down among them in his white robes they rose up and moved aside as though they feared he would defile them.

"At last I could wait no longer. I rose to my feet and called to him: 'I am a stonemason, making a living by my

hands. I pray thee, Jesus, restore me that I may not shamefully have to beg my bread.'

"He looked at me, and O, the pity that was in his eyes, and he argued with the rulers for a minute or two whether it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath day. When they dared answer him nothing, he turned to me once more.

"'Stretch out thy hand,' he said. 'Stretch it out!' And I have not been able to lift it these many months, as you all know well. I looked at him and then looked down at my useless arm. It grew warm and alive again, and before I knew it I had stretched it out, and my arm was whole!"

Neri paused. The memory of that hour was too much for him.

"What did they say?" a voice asked at his elbow.

"I know not. I only saw the anger in their faces as they gathered up their robes and hurried out of the synagogue. They looked so angry I thought they would have dragged him out and stoned him for a Sabbath breaker. He knew it, too, and yet he seemed not to care. He dared their anger and their wrath for me, that a poor stonemason with a withered arm might be healed and might not have to beg his bread." Neri dropped his tools and hid his face in his hands.

"And this Jesus was not afraid of them," some one commented, as if his courage was as wonderful as his power.

XXXVI

THE SAMARITAN'S STORY

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

You may be inclined to dismiss this story as pure invention. So it is. But what is more likely than that the Samaritan told the story of his experiences to a friend? And, being the man he was, would he not be inclined to make light of the whole affair and to utterly disparage the part he himself had played in it? Each of the characters in that parable would have his own story to tell. The man who was wounded and robbed would tell the story of his experiences to the innkeeper. The innkeeper might well tell the story as he heard it to other customers on some dark evening when travelers wore few and the house was quiet. And each would tell it according to his character. The robbed man would tell of his fears and the attack, of his sufferings and of the impression made upon him by the priest and the Levite and of the utter unexpectedness of receiving help from a Samaritan. It may have been that the priest and the Levite and the Samaritan all met that night at the inn. So the innkeeper would tell you of the excuses and the apologies they made.

"The wind blows cool, Abner; it is time we went down into the house." Micah pulled his cloak about his shoulders and led the way down the steps to the courtyard, where palms and oleanders grew about a wide stone basin in whose center a fountain played.

Abner followed him more slowly, as if he were wearied with the day's labor and presently, with a sigh of content, sat upon a softly cushioned divan in an inner room while his host called a servant to bring wine and dishes of fruit. The fruit was so fine that the fame of it was known far beyond Jericho. Even in the palaces of Jerusalem and Cæsarea they talked of the orchards of Micah the Samaritan of Jericho.

"Would I had been in as happy a place when the dusk fell last night," Abner said contentedly.

"I had hoped that your business in Jerusalem would have made it possible for you to have been here last night, Abner, and my heart was lonely indeed for lack of your companionship."

"I should have been here but for that which befell me by the way." Abner spoke slowly, as though recalling something not quite clear in his mind. He paused, but as Micah made no answer he went on again after a moment or two.

"I had been in Jerusalem, as you know, a city of pride and of cursing. Their hate for us Samaritans grows greater from year to year."

Micah looked up. "It is said that the rabbis have declared that to eat a Samaritan's food is as the eating of swine's flesh."

"It is true. Nor will they drink of a cup handed them by a Samaritan. Yet are we all the children of one father, I think. They treated me as a thing unclean, and but for the fact that they needed my goods they would have spat upon me. So they hindered me and delayed me until the day was late, and it was middle afternoon before I could set out on my journey."

"Thou hadst done well to wait till morning," Micah suggested.

"So. But I felt eager to shake off the dust of such a city from my feet, and I thought that as it was two hours and more from sunset I might reach the Desert Inn. My mule is a good one, as you know well, Micah, and he traveled swiftly, so that I passed the road below the village of the robbers, Abu Dis, in safety and in good time and came to the place where the road winds round that tall pillar of rock which men call Solomon's Staff."

Abner paused to refresh himself from his wine cup. "I know it well," Micah commented, "too well."

"Just there I heard a sound as of the groans of a stricken man and pulled up my mule on the instant. I heard the groans more plainly now, but hesitated to dismount, fearing that it might be some trap set for me by the robbers. At last I jumped off and looked over the rocks and found—who think you, Micah?"

"Some one whom you had known in Samaria?"

"Nay, but a Jew who had cursed me as I rubbed against him in a narrow street in Jerusalem. I tell thee, Micah, I was tempted to leave him there to perish for the curse he had put upon me. Moreover, it was growing late and would soon be dark, and the Bloody Way of the Wady Kelt is no place for honest men when darkness falls. He was but a Jew, I thought, and why should I run risks for such a man as he, a man who had cursed me to my face, cursed me, Micah, so that even now I burn to think of all he said of me."

"You had done well," Micah interjected. "Why should a Samaritan risk his life for a dog of a Jew? He would not have done anything for thee, had thy plight been his."

"So I thought. But his nakedness and his wounds cried out to me. I poured a little wine between his lips. He opened his eyes and looked up at me, but when he saw I was a Samaritan he closed them again and groaned in despair. I told him I would care for him and poured in oil and wine and bound up his wounds."

"Ah, now I know!" Micah rose to his feet and laid his hand upon his friend's arm. "My servant Michael showed me a handsome garment somewhat torn and blood-stained he told me you had given him. That was the garment you spoiled to bind up the wounds of a man who was a Jew!"

"But what could I do?" Abner protested with outspread hands. "He would have died in the night, and when I had bound up his wounds and given him a little wine he was able to walk with his arm about my shoulders."

"Abner, thou art a very humble man," Micah waved an accusing forefinger, "and with his arm about thy shoulders and thy torn cloak hiding his nakedness did he walk all the way to the inn?"

"Nay; how could he? Moreover, it was already dusk, and the moon had not yet risen, and I was anxious to be at the inn; so I set him on my mule that we might travel more swiftly. And by the protection of God we reached the inn safely, and no robbers molested us by the way."

Micah looked his friend in the eyes. "And dost thou tell me that the innkeeper of the Desert Inn, as great a robber as any who dwells in Abu Dis, took in this naked, wounded, robbed man and cared for him for the love of God and of good works? Or didst thou pay for him, Abner?"

Abner smiled. "I gave the innkeeper two pence," he said with a modest wave of the hand as if to indicate that he had really done nothing.

"I am sure," Micah smiled, "and told him to give that Jew the best he had and thou wouldst recompense him on thy homeward journey. Abner, my friend, thou art worthy of heaven, but thou art too kindly a man for earth to spare thee yet. The Lord of heaven reward thee according to thy works. That dog of a Jew will not, or he is unlike any Jew whom I have ever known. And thou art a Samaritan. Come, Abner, the stars are calling us to rest. May God give his angels charge concerning thee, if, indeed, thou art not one of his angels thyself. I sometimes think thou art."

XXXVII

WHEN THE SAMARITAN RETURNED

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

The teller of stories often finds that he has to tell the same story again and again, and he looks for some new method of making the familiar story fresh. This story and the preceding one, "The Samaritan's Story," are inserted as examples of one method of dealing with that difficulty. The story is told either by a different character or from a different standpoint. The Samaritan would not tell his story to the innkeeper just as he told it to his friend. Even in a bare recital of facts the particular audience influences the story-teller.

THE surly, unlovely face of the innkeeper twisted itself into an unaccustomed smile of pleasure when he saw who was the visitor who had summoned him to the gate of the inn.

The Samaritan's upright stature made a vivid contrast to the innkeeper's bent shoulders and heavy paunched body as his benevolent, full-bearded face did to the innkeeper's thin, hard features or his robes of deep blue silk to Nemuel's stained shabby garb of coarse cloth. But the two men seemed to understand each other. The innkeeper gave the merchant a grudging admiration for his generosity and his kindness, an admiration that would have been whole-hearted but for the fact that Nemuel, as a good Jew, felt it to be his duty to despise all Samaritans; while Abner laughed at the innkeeper's surliness and greed and pitied him a little in his heart for all that he missed in life.

The old Desert Inn betrayed its owner's character. Even the vine that grew above the porch and the fig trees that were just beyond its corner looked as weary as though they belonged to some one who grudged them sunlight and rain; and only the generous-hearted sun, pouring down upon lichen-patched walls and litter-strewn, flat roof tried to impart a touch of beauty.

"O man in whose veins flows the milk of kindness," the Samaritan smiled, speaking very humbly, "canst thou find a resting place for me and this good beast of mine and prepare me a meal?"

Nemuel spread his thin hands as though he would thrust aside the undeserved compliment. His face twisted itself once more.

"All that I have is thine; and would that it were worthy of so much courage and compassion, but I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof."

The innkeeper shuffled off, denouncing the idle worthlessness of the servant who had not answered his call, and the Samaritan was left alone. He looked at the inn with strange eyes that had something in them that transfigured the dingy, unwelcoming place. How often he had caught himself eagerly looking forward to this hour when he should see the old place again. He had dreamed of it with a pleasure that was almost childish. The memory of the dark peril of the night when he had stumbled down the Jericho road with one arm about the wounded man who swayed and jerked on the back of his mule had faded out. Nothing was left now but the happy memory of a kindly deed, and that happy memory centered round this old inn. Such places are not too frequent along the common road of life. He had run a great risk that evening. But what of that? It had turned out well. He had made an investment, and it had proved profitable. After all, life was very good. His dream was shattered by the complaining bitterness of the innkeeper as he came with his servant to lead the Samaritan's mule away, and he thought no more of it for a while.

But that evening, when the day's work was done, and the lamps were lit and the evening meal was finished, and while yet it was too early to retire to rest the innkeeper and the

Samaritan sat together over their wine and talked of this and that until Nemuel could restrain his curiosity no longer. He had heard one side of the story from the wounded man while he had nursed him. That had made him anxious to hear the other side of it. "Tell me how it came about that you did so much for that man in such an hour and in such a place," he pleaded. The Samaritan was not loth to tell the story. His surroundings had brought it all back to his mind very vividly, and he savored once more the happiness of service. He drank deeply of the cup of wine at his elbow. He knew the story would be long in the telling.

"I was hurrying that afternoon, thinking of nothing save the roughness of the way and wishing that the Romans would make all roads good and remembering without gladness the merchant with whom I had done business in Jerusalem that day. I am persuaded that that man must carry a millstone in his bosom instead of a heart, and he must carry another millstone for a mind, so hard was it to make him understand anything, or to persuade him to pay an honest price for my goods. But I am only a poor Samaritan, O worthy son of Abraham, so perhaps it was a good and acceptable thing before God to keep me waiting and delay me and treat me as a thing unclean; for all that he needed my goods more than I needed his shekels. I thought, even as I set out, that I should do well to wait till morning, but I was eager to shake off the dust of that city from my feet, and as it was yet two hours to sunset and my mule was swift and sure-footed, I hoped that I might reach the Desert Inn before nightfall."

"And thou didst know," Nemuel interrupted, filling the Samaritan's wine cup, "that no traveler is more welcome here than thou art. I think that the old inn itself remembers thee with love."

Abner smiled. "Thy words are as sweet as thy wine," he replied, acknowledging the compliment; then he resumed his story. "I am too old a traveler and have heard too many tales to wish to linger in the Wadi Kelt, and my mule was like-minded with me, for he traveled swiftly. He also, I think, dreamed of a quiet rest and a safe lodging. But just after we passed below the village of the robbers—whom may God destroy, for the Romans will not—and had turned by that tall pillar of rock which men call Solomon's Staff, I heard what sounded like the groan of one about to die. I pulled up my mule and looked about me, fearful that it might be some trap which the robbers had set. As I did I heard him groan again and from somewhere close at my left hand. I looked among the rocks and found him lying there, and when I got to him I should have deemed him dead but for his groans. His wounds were many and grievous, as thou dost know full well, and the thieves had stripped him naked. I forced a little wine between his lips, and a little life crept back into his white face, and with water from a little pool among the rocks I washed the blood from his face. Then I saw who he was."

Nemuel laid his hand on Abner's arm and interrupted him. "Then thou didst know him before. Maybe that was why thou didst care for him. Perchance he was thy friend." Nemuel thought he had found the clue to the mystery of it all, a mystery over which he had often pondered. But the Samaritan shook his head.

"I do not think he would have called me friend," he said quietly, "for that very day I had rubbed against him in a narrow street in Jerusalem, and he had cursed me for a Samaritan dog. Even now my face burns as I think of all that he said of me and the curses he sought to put upon me. And when I saw him there I was tempted to leave him.

It was growing late and would soon be dark, and the Wadi Kelt is no place for honest men when darkness falls. But his nakedness and his wounds cried out to me, and when I poured a little wine between his lips again he opened his eyes and looked at me. When he saw that I was a Samaritan he closed them again in despair. I told him that I would care for him and poured in oil and wine and bound up his wounds."

"And that was a goodly garment of thine which thou didst spoil that day to care for him. Old Tobias showed me the remnant of it which thou hadst given him. It was such a garment as I never hope to have this side of Paradise. Tobias looks like a molting peacock in it."

"There was naught else," Abner protested. "He would have died in the night of the cold and his wounds if I had not cared for him. Surely a man is better than a silken robe, Nemuel, and, remember, he was a good Jew, and I was only a dog of a Samaritan. When I had cared for him a little he was able to walk with his arm about my shoulders."

"O man of great humility," Nemuel interposed, waving an accusing forefinger, "and would you have me believe that he walked all the way to the Desert Inn with no more than his arm about thy shoulders? Do I not know full well that he was set upon thine own beast, with thy cloak about him to cover his nakedness and shield him from the cold while thou didst walk at his side holding him lest he should faint and fall? If thou hadst not been born a Samaritan, methinks that Father Abraham might have been proud to number thee among his sons."

Abner blushed, for he was naturally a modest man, and such praise from any Jew and especially from such a one as Nemuel, the innkeeper, was praise indeed. He tried to push it away.

"But my care of him had taken up much time, and it was already dusk there in the valley and the moon had not yet risen, and I was anxious to be at the inn; so I set him on my mule that we might travel more swiftly. And by the protection of God, to whom be praise forever and ever, we reached the inn safely, and no robbers molested us on the way. And I remember that there is the matter of a reckoning betwixt thee and me, Nemuel, for the many days the man was under thy roof and for all the care thou didst bestow upon him."

Abner drew a leather bag out of his belt, whose contents jingled softly as he handled them.

"Put up thy purse again. The days were not many, and the care was not burdensome. It shall not be said in Israel that a Samaritan would do so much and a Jew would do naught." Nor for all the merchant's pleading would the innkeeper take more than the two pence he had received at the first; though some who heard the story afterwards and knew Nemuel would not believe it true.

"And there is another matter. The man bade me tell thee that Simeon, the pearl merchant, who liveth on the hill above Capernaum, for the man to whom thou ministered was none other than he, hath a great love for thee, and he looks for the day when he can thank thee for thy mercy even as those who watch for the morning."

Abner smiled, but made no reply. The old innkeeper looked at him, trying to read his thoughts. The flickering yellow light of the lamp fell softly on the Samaritan's face. "God give his angels charge concerning thee," the innkeeper said in formal farewell, then added in the tone of one who sees a vision of holy things: "if, indeed, thou art not one of his angels thyself. I sometimes think thou art."

XXXVIII

THE TALE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMAN

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

Much of the way in which a story is told depends on the audience for whom it is intended. The incidents emphasized in a story for boys will not be those on which stress is laid in a story written for girls, while a story written for seniors will have still another emphasis. This is an example of a story written for members of Adult Bible Classes. It is also an example of the way in which a story may be expanded without bringing in any extraneous material. I have endeavored to make the messengers something more than lay figures. I have not only given them names, but I have tried to indicate their characters. The group of men beneath the crossroad trees act as a connecting link for the various incidents in the story and by their comments act as a necessary chorus. The moralizing which is undesirable in a story told to children is appropriate here, but it needs to be woven into the fabric of the story.

THERE are places in every land which are saturated with history, and none perhaps more than the little country half the world calls the Holy Land. For the writer of history it is a land whose stones are silver and out of whose hills he may dig gold. There is not a field where the plow of his imagination will not turn up hid treasure. That was particularly true of a group of trees at a crossroads. More slowly and less regularly than the generations of men the trees had grown to maturity, fallen into decay, and others had grown from seedlings to saplings and from saplings to great trees. There in dark days of long ago men had offered sacrifices of blood on rude altars of stone and brought offerings to the spirits of the trees. There in later days they had rested as they paused for an hour in their long journeys and had told tales of distant lands and strange happenings. There each generation of men had gathered in their turn,

had told of this man's love and that man's hate; of this one's strength and of that other's folly. Bearded men of Assyria and Chaldea and smooth-faced men of Egypt had all in turn been welcome to the shade of the trees. There had been times when the grass was wet with the tears of broken men and bereaved women who were being carried captive to Babylon and times when the leaves had trembled to the triumph songs of those who had followed Judas Maccabeus. As their fathers had sat there and boasted of the splendor of Solomon and scorned the folly of Jehoiakim; so the men of to-day gathered and talked of the glory of the court of Herod and murmured at the burden of the rule of Cæsar.

So there beneath the trees men watched the pageant of the passing hour, saw the events which Jesus wove into a story, and commented upon them according to their wisdom and their knowledge or their lack of it. Detached and interested spectators, they watched the play they first deemed a comedy deepen into a tragedy that needed the vision and the soul of Jesus of Nazareth to bring out its hidden meaning.

They gravely saluted Bildad the merchant as he rode away and looked after him with real regret. He was a man who had won every man's good word, and they felt that their land would be the poorer for his loss now that business called him to a far country. But they had shaken grave heads and lifted amazed hands at the news that he had left his vineyards in the stewardship of such a man as Zophar, the son of Reuben.

"Bildad will pay dearly for his kindness of heart," old Enoch said. His great age had entitled him to a seat beneath the tallest tree for many years past. "I have known Bildad since he was a stripling boy, and many times have I known him swear to his own hurt and change not. He seem-

eth to have a kind heart for such rogues as Zophar, but I fear that he will never enjoy the fruit of his vineyard."

"The friends that Zophar hath in the town will spoil him of all his substance. If a man makes friends with the daughters of the horse leech, he must pay for his folly."

"But Zophar hath nothing of his own. The very clothes upon his back are those his master has given him; and the vineyard is that which Bildad hath planted."

"The things that are written in the hearts of men shall be declared in the days that are yet to be," old Enoch declared oracularly and rose to his feet as a sign that the session had ended.

Interest in what men came to call Zophar's vineyard soon died down. Few people remembered that he was only the steward of Bildad and paid no heed to the fashion in which he used all the fruit of the vineyard as though it were his own. It did him little good. The men Zophar gathered about him were like-minded with himself. His heavy figure, slumped upon his mule like one of his own full wine skins, caused no man to envy him. His green cloak and his brown headcloth were familiar in tavern and market place, but no poor man called blessings down upon his name; nor did he sleep sounder at nights for the treasure hidden in his house.

Three years had passed away, and the beauty of autumn glorified the land. Purple grapes hung in heavy clusters in the vineyards, while melons and oranges, apricots and lemons hung like golden lanterns amid the dark green of the trees. In every grove and vineyard the watchmen stood upon their towers or sat in the green booths they built on tall posts to guard the harvest from the prowling thieves.

"There is news," said Caleb the potter one evening, as men sat in the shade of the trees, "news such as will bring forth a harvest of news as corn sown in the earth bringeth

forth a harvest. O, such news as maketh a man's ears to tingle to know what tidings next will come."

He paused to allow the importance of his statement to sink in. No one answered him. They knew he would tell them all in good time.

"A message has come from Bildad the merchant to Zophar. He says that he is sending a trusty servant to receive his share of the fruits."

The announcement was received with cynical laughter. "There is no share," they said. "Zophar and those who are with him have devoured all the fruit of the vineyard. When he hears, what will Bildad say?"

"What can he say but that his heart went in ways of folly when he trusted Zophar?"

A few days later the messenger of Bildad came to the crossroads on his homeward journey. He was obviously a very weak man. The bandage about his head was wet with the blood of a reopened wound, and as he dismounted from his kneeling camel he seemed on the point of fainting.

"Thou art too weak to journey so far," the others said to him. "Rest a few days until thy wounds are healed. There are many houses in the city where thou wouldest be welcomed for Bildad's sake."

The messenger raised his head and smiled. "For Bildad's sake Rufus his servant must return swiftly. For, see, Zophar and the others spake me fair and feasted me for many days, and every time I asked for that which was due to my master they promised it on the morrow. When at last I declared that I could wait no longer they treated me shamefully. One struck me from behind and cried, 'Take that to Bildad for his rent,' and the others struck me again and again. 'Take that also,' they cried. 'And that!' 'Thinkest thou that we slave and bear the burden and heat of the

day that Bildad may eat the fruit of our labors?' At last they flung me out of the vineyard and threw dirt at me from the walls. Yet I only asked for that which is my master's."

When he had recovered a little the messenger went on his way. The men watched him down the road. "I have lived long and seen many things," old Enoch commented, "and the end of the story is not yet. Zophar laughs to-day, but the laughter of the wicked is as a fire of brushwood."

Winter had come and gone, and with the spring the flowers once more were appearing on the earth, and men were undertaking the journeys that had been too difficult in winter. Many travelers passed before the crossroad trees and brought news of happenings in many lands.

One morning a handsome stranger, whose dress betokened his importance, pulled up his fine riding camel and, greeting the two or three men who were there, asked for the vineyards of Bildad.

"'Of Bildad!' You mean the vineyards of Zophar!"

The jingling of the camel's bells as he tossed his head was a contemptuous comment on the words.

"'My master, Bildad the merchant, whom may God preserve, hath a vineyard in this town which he hath let out to husbandmen, of whom the chief is Zophar. Know you of the place?"

"Who does not? And who does not know of what happened to the last messenger whom Bildad sent?"

The stranger smiled contemptuously and turned round. The comment interested him, and he ran long fingers through a carefully tended beard.

"That was Rufus, a foolish man. My master thinks that Rufus failed to demand the money or else that he played him false. He returned with a tale of having been beaten and

cast out. So that is the vineyard of Bildad there on the southern hills. We go to gather that which is due to him. We shall see!"

He jerked his camel's head and moved off, and the men at the crossroads let him go without further comment. "We shall see truly," old Enoch muttered in his beard, and the wrinkles in his old face deepened as he smiled.

The afternoon was not old when the messenger of Bildad the merchant drew up his winded camel once more at the crosroads. He had lost the well-groomed appearance of the morning. The plume was missing from his turban; his silk robes were torn, and mud had spattered his well-kept beard. A purple bruise disfigured one cheek bone, and a nasty wound gaped on one hip of his camel. In spite of his appearance, the men who looked at him found it hard to pity him.

"O, and have you the moneys for your master?" they inquired.

The face the stranger turned toward them was still full of amazement.

"They stoned me," he gasped, "stoned me! Balthasar, the chief steward of Bildad the merchant. The story that Rufus told must have been true! They stoned me as soon as I mentioned my master's name."

Still muttering in amazed indignation, Balthasar, the chief steward of Bildad the merchant, went on his way to find some lodging where he might smooth his ruffled plumes and meditate upon the indignity which had been put upon him.

"He is a good steward," old Enoch remarked, pointing his staff at the retreating figure. "He has gathered all he could for his master."

After this Zophar and those who were with him began to fear what Bildad might do. They made the vineyard into

a fortress and armed themselves, expecting that Bildad would attempt to take by force that which they had denied him as his right. Men watched and commented and commended Zophar and the rest for their foresight. "For," men said, "Bildad's patience must be at an end."

Once more, at the time of the ingathering of the fruits, the messengers of Bildad approached the trees at the cross-roads. Only old Enoch and two or three others, equally aged and infirm, were there to watch them pass, for all men were busy at the harvest time. The merchant had sent a company of his servants this time, fearing such treatment as had been given before.

"Know you this man Zophar, who hath seized the vineyards of Bildad the merchant?" inquired the leader, saluting the old man courteously. Old Enoch pointed to where the watchtower and the wall of the vineyard shone white in the sunlight.

"So that is the nest of the serpents, my father," the leader commented. "The harvest of that vineyard looks heavy, and the wine vats should be overflowing. There should be much gain to take to my master."

Something about the leader appealed to the old man. "Sir, thou art young," he said, looking up into his face. "So beware of the vineyard. Zophar and the rest have fortified it and made it strong, and they boast day and night of all they will do to those who come from Bildad. Life is good and length of days is a good thing to enjoy. So guard thyself well and those who are with thee. Peace to thee."

"And to thee be peace," the young man answered as he rode off with serious, set face, for old Enoch's impressive warning had touched him deeply.

Erelong the mesenger of Bildad and some of those who had traveled with him came to the crossroads again. Not

merely with hard words, not with harder stones, had they been received, but with such weapons of offense that three of them had been killed and others had been sore wounded, and now those who had survived were hastening back to tell their master of all that had befallen them.

"Who sows the wind shall reap the whirlwind," old Enoch muttered, and thought with sorrow of those who lay before the vineyard gates, who nevermore would feel the wind or know the peril of the whirlwind's furious might.

Unnoticed and unrecognized, the patient merchant's son passed the crossroads and went through the village. None knew him until he came to the vineyard gate and Zophar and the rest went down to speak to him. The husbandmen drew apart and whispered together.

"The heir," they said; "he alone stands between us and full possession. His father is an old man and may never send again, may never come. If we slay the heir, the vineyard will be ours. Why should we toil and bear the burden and have to give part of the profits to him. Come, let us kill him."

Men passing by found a dead body on the ground by the vineyard that men called Zophar's and discovered at last that it was the body of Joshua, the son of Bildad, the merchant, who had come to plead with Zophar and the others to give his father his share of the fruits. They buried him in a quiet place and sent a messenger to his father with the news.

Once more beneath the crossroad trees they talked of the vineyard of Bildad and the iniquities of Zophar and the rest.

"I tell you what Bildad will do," old Enoch said; "he will condemn them to such a wretched end as such wretches deserve, and he will give the vineyard to such as will be just with him." The others nodded their agreement, feeling that the only just word had been said.

XXXIX

THE STORY OF THE LOVING FATHER

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

The stories of Jesus are so perfectly told that one is always afraid of spoiling them by retelling them. The only excuse for the attempt is the endeavor to make the familiar live. This is an attempt to retell the story from the standpoint of the father, making the father, rather than the son, the central figure. But, after you have told it, it would be a good thing to say, "Now let us hear the story as Jesus told it."

With a light-hearted laugh Levi had turned away from the gate and ridden his white mule down the path that led to the great highroad, waving a cheery farewell to the old man who stood in the arched gateway. There was no answering smile upon Judah's face; rather it seemed as if the shadows deepened. He raised his hand to shade his eyes from the light and watched the cantering mule and its gay-spirited rider. At the bend of the road Levi halted his mule, turned in the saddle and raised his hand to his father in courteous farewell. Judah lifted his hand in acknowledgment, watched his son disappear from sight, then after a moment turned to go into the house.

As he crossed the courtyard, Nathan, his elder son, came down the steps from the roof where he, too, had been watching. He saw the anxiety in his father's face, the tears that even now were wet upon his cheeks, and he was angry, knowing their cause. "Why care so greatly about him?" Nathan snarled, pausing to face his father. "What has he cared about you?"

Judah looked up at his son with an astonishment that was almost too great for speech.

"Why? Is he not my son?"

"Much has he remembered it!" came the bitter reply. "Did he not demand his portion of thy estate, and as soon as he received it he has gone his way to squander it?"

Judah looked steadily at Nathan as though he were a stranger whom he tried in vain to recognize. He opened his mouth as if about to speak; then he closed his lips again, shook his head, and went slowly into the house.

Judah was never the same again. He no longer responded cheerily to the greeting of the men in vineyard and field, but passed by as though he neither saw nor heard. He would spend hours alone upon the roof top or on a little hill that commanded the road watching for the lad who never came.

The days went swiftly past. Weeks became months. Summer turned to winter, and spring brought summer round once more, and still Judah watched and waited for the boy who never came.

"The master grows old!" one of the servants said to another as he passed by.

"It is not the burden of his years, but the burden of his sorrows that ages him."

News came from time to time of the lad in the far country, but it was always news that added to the weight of Judah's burden and drew deeper lines upon his face.

"He is spending his substance in riotous living," men said. "He is making the name of his father a mocking and a reproach."

Men grieved for the old man in his shame, but dared not mention Levi's name to him.

"Is he not my son?" he cried when some one brought some evil tale. "Can a man cast off his own son?"

After that men repeated no more the tales they heard of all that Levi did.

"There is famine in the far country," a stranger said one day.

"And what of my son? How does he fare?" Judah asked instantly.

The stranger paused, afraid to speak. Judah gripped his arm and looked into his eyes as though he would read the answer there.

"He feedeth swine in the fields for one who is a citizen of that country," the stranger answered at last and kept his eyes on the ground lest he should read the sorrow and the shame in Judah's face. When he looked up it was to see the old man going to his chamber, with bent head and bowed shoulders, shaken with sobs.

"He will come back some day," Judah said to himself, and still he waited and watched as though he only lived for the day when his son should come back to him. Then one day, as he watched, he saw a figure far down the road. The man was bent and broken. His clothes were such as a leper might have despised. But something about the figure seemed familiar in spite of the bent shoulders and the slouching feet. Judah rose to his feet, looked steadily at the approaching figure, and with a great cry of joy, forgetting his dignity and his age, he ran toward him.

The ragged, beggar-like man paused, astonished, and as soon as his father came near, he began to repeat the speech he had so carefully prepared.

"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

Levi got no further. His father's arms were about his neck. His father's kisses upon his lips made it impossible for him to say more. Before he could recover from his

amazement they were almost at the door of the house, and his father was calling all the servants who were near and sending them on this errand and on that.

"Hurry! One of you fetch the best robe we have in the house!"

"And you! Give my boy a ring for his hand! Bring shoes for his feet! Go fetch the fatted calf and kill it and let us have a right merry feast! For this boy of mine was dead and has come to life again. He was lost and is found!"

So they began to make merry.

"So," Jesus said, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

XL

PETER'S SECOND CHANCE

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

You have to picture a man's mood, never an easy thing to do. The only way to do it is to show how Peter looked to other people. That works up to the brief scene of the setting out. The hopeless dawn soon merges into the great catch, and you have the final scene of the walk and the talk by the shore. Notice how, by the use of the two different Greek words used for "love," the conversation becomes full of meaning, while in the old English version it is almost meaningless.

Peter Goes Fishing

The days that followed the resurrection were some of the most wonderful days the disciples had ever known. Jesus came to them in all sorts of times and places. Sometimes when they were least expecting him the door would open and he would be there, or they would be talking as they walked and one would break off in the middle of a sentence because he thought that Jesus would be somewhere near at hand, listening. At last Jesus told them to go to Galilee and wait there for him. He said that soon he would be leaving them altogether. So Peter and John and the others went back to Galilee, but the days went quickly by, and still Jesus did not come.

The other people who had known Peter and the rest before could not understand them now. Some of them were ready to laugh at Peter because his splendid dreams and his great ambitions had been a failure, but Peter did not appear to think that they had failed. He talked of a rising from the dead, of Jesus being with them now just as he had been in the old days, of being back in Galilee because Jesus had sent

them there to wait for him, talked and acted so strangely that the others pitied him, thinking that much sorrow and great disappointment had made him mad. They were more sure of it as days went by, and still Jesus did not come and Peter's hope deepened into disappointment.

One evening Peter was standing on the shore with a group of other disciples just as the boats were setting out for their evening's fishing. The sights and sounds of that hour are very interesting and very familiar to them—the smell of the bark-tanned nets, the creak of the ropes, the click and splash of the oars, the cries of the fishermen. They studied the sky and the water with expert eyes and tried to discover what were the prospects of a good night's fishing. A love for the old fisherman's life swept over them.

"I go a-fishing," Peter cried. "Then we will come with thee," the others cried, weary of waiting and glad of an opportunity of doing something. In a very little while a boat and nets had been borrowed, the boat had been dragged down the beach into the water, and they set out. They hung out a lighted lantern, flung out their nets, rowed from one place to another, but every time they hauled in the nets they were empty. Even the places where fish could always be found were empty now. They were in utter despair. They felt that they had lost everything, even their old skill as fishermen, of which they had been so proud.

A Wonderful Dawn

The dawn was misty and chill as they rowed wearily toward the shore. They were tired and dejected, and the boat seemed as heavy as lead. A voice hailed them from the shore, "Lads, have you caught anything?"

They did not trouble to turn their heads. They took it for granted that it was one of the lakeside fish merchants.

"We have toiled all night and caught nothing," they answered wearily; and the oars creaked and splashed as they rowed shoreward.

A minute or two later the voice hailed them again, "Cast your net out on the right side, and you will have a catch."

Their weariness and despair dropped away as though by magic. They looked shoreward, but could see only a dim, hazy figure. It was often easier to see signs of fish from the shore than from the boat, but they were grateful to this unknown helper. His advice proved good. The net was thrown out and inclosed such a host of fish that the boat heeled over with the weight of the catch. There was no time to think of anything now for a while except to secure the fish and the net, for they feared every moment that the net would break.

The mist had cleared a good deal by the time they were able to look shoreward again. Now the figure of their friend on the shore was much clearer, and they could see that he had a fire kindled on the beach. John stood up straight, shaded his eyes, and looked steadily for a moment or two. Then he uttered a glad, joyous exclamation, clutched at Peter's arm, and cried, "Peter, Peter, it is the Lord!"

Peter stood beside him and looked and confirmed John's statement. He snatched up his outer coat, which he had thrown off whilst they had been so busy, threw it round him, tucked it up into his girdle, jumped overboard, and half-swam, half-waded ashore to where Jesus was standing. In a few minutes the boat had grounded on the beach and the others had crowded round the Lord, joining with Peter in their cries of joy and welcome. The net was dragged ashore and the fish sorted out. They had caught that day 153 fine fish—John remembered the exact number years

afterwards—and in a little while some of the fish were cooking over the fire which Jesus had made for them.

A Walk and a Talk

When the meal was over Jesus called Peter, and they walked along the shore.

"Peter," Jesus said at last, "art thou more of a friend to me than those others?" Peter looked troubled; all the old love for Jesus was warm in his heart, all the deep sorrow for his failure. "A friend, Lord," Peter answered. "I love thee as a lover, not as a friend." "Then feed my lambs," Jesus said. "Do the work of a shepherd boy." Once more Jesus said to Peter, "Are you sure you love me as a friend?" "Lord, I do not love thee as a friend, but as a lover." "Then tend my sheep. Do the work of an under-shepherd." They talked a little longer, and a third time Jesus put the question, this time using the warmer word Peter himself had used.

"Peter, *do* you love me as a lover?" Peter's sorrow looked out of his eyes. Three times he had denied; three times Jesus put the question.

"Lord, you know everything," he cried. "You know that I love you as a lover."

"Feed my flock," Jesus said. "Do the work of a good shepherd."

And as they walked back along the shore in the growing light of the early day, Peter knew that he had been given his second chance.

XLI

ANANIAS: THE STORY OF ONE SPLENDID HOUR

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

At first sight the place which Ananias fills in the book of the Acts is so slight that to attempt to make a story about him is the proverbial task of making bricks without straw. But character is just as good story material as incident, if only it is wisely handled. From the way in which Saul and Ananias greeted one another it seems probable they had met before; and if they had met, it is equally probable that they had crossed swords. The news that Saul was on his way to Damascus, armed with authority from the high priests, must have kindled terror in the hearts of the Christians, and only Ananias could have steadied them. Human nature being human, many would rejoice at the news of Saul's misfortune, and Ananias would experience great conflict of soul before he could win through to the place of pity and forgiveness. The news of Saul's strange attitude could not be kept secret in an Eastern city which was like a vast whispering gallery, and the news would have its effect on Ananias. So the way was prepared for the one splendid hour.

Even in extreme old age Ananias still remembered every vivid moment of the days when Saul came down to Damascus and those great things happened that changed all the story of the world. Some men of Damascus had been among those who had surrendered heart and life to Jesus on the day of Pentecost, and they had come back to their own city full of enthusiastic zeal. Without seeking it, without any special election, Ananias had become their leader. It was he who led their worship when they met alone, and it was he who led their arguments when they debated in the synagogue that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah. That was how he had first known the Rabbi Saul of Tarsus. Saul had been in Damascus before; and when Ananias had argued for the teaching of the Nazarene, Saul had turned on him.

With a scorn that cut like a whip and with an argument as keen as a sword blade of Damascus, Saul had argued that it was blasphemy to declare that one who had hung upon a tree, one accursed by the very law of God, could be the Messiah. He had openly lamented that he could not silence and imprison these blasphemous dogs who followed the way of the Nazarene.

Ananias had listened patiently. He had restrained those who sat about him, who were eager to contend publicly with Saul. He admitted that the Rabbi Saul had beaten him in argument. "No man need be ashamed whom the Rabbi Saul confounds in a strife of tongues," Ananias had said with a deep bow. "But the rabbi's arguments have not robbed me of the peace which is mine through believing on Jesus of Nazareth, nor of the joy in my heart. Has the law of Moses given the learned rabbi such peace, such joy as I have found?"

Saul had winced at the challenge. His face flamed. He half rose to his feet as though he would reply, then sank into his seat and tugged impatiently at his beard. The next day he had left for Jerusalem, and now every messenger who came brought fresh news that this believer had been imprisoned, that that one had been flogged, and that many others, through fear of the Jews, had denied the name and forsaken the way. Soon those who had fled from Jerusalem because life itself was no longer safe from Saul's persecution began to appear in Damascus, and the stories they told caused the courage of many to fail, fearing a similar fiery trial. Success only seemed to inflame Saul's passion more and more. When the believers fled from Jerusalem he pursued them and persecuted them in other cities. The name of the Rabbi Saul became a nightmare to them. They feared him almost as they feared the evil one himself.

Then the story of the martyrdom of Stephen thrilled them with its horror and its splendor. They had faced the possibility of imprisonment, of torture, but until now the shadow of martyrdom had not fallen upon them. The gaps in the ranks of those who followed the way grew wider and more noticeable. In vain Ananias told of the man who, looking on the face of dying Stephen, saw it as though the glory of a door open in heaven shone upon it—"as it were the face of an angel." They had caught a glimpse of themselves dead among the far-flung stones, and they had stolen away. Better have such faces as they had than faces crushed by the stones, even though the light of heaven shone upon you then.

Now a messenger mounted on a swift camel had made his steed kneel before the house of Ananias. Dismounting eagerly, he had hurried in, looking swiftly round to see who listened. Then he had spoken but two words, "Rabbi Saul." Ananias flinched for a moment; then he set his lips tight and waited for the messenger to continue. "He comes to Damascus with letters from the chief priests. All who follow the Way he will bind and carry to Jerusalem." Ananias bowed his head slowly in token that he understood, then dismissed the messenger. He felt he must be alone to gather his resources and think out what this new peril might mean.

The next time the followers of Jesus gathered they needed no words to tell them what had happened to Ananias. The story of his fight was seen in the lines about his lips and eyes. It could be heard in the very tones of his voice. He said little to them, but the spirit of the man proclaimed itself. The wavering were steadied; the feeble were heartened; the weak were amazed at the measure of their strength. The faith of Ananias was a great hedge about them, breaking the force of the storm winds of their fears. And after-

wards when they met and greeted him he was the same to them.

But in the secret of his own chamber Ananias had had many a dark hour. He saw again the savage hate in the eyes of the rulers of the synagogue as he had contended with Saul. Once again the memories of Saul's voice full of bitter contempt echoed down the hidden places of his mind. He knew that he would be singled out, whoever might go free. When fiery trial came—suppose they stoned him as they had stoned Stephen?—could he endure? Then he would cast himself upon Jesus, who had endured to the end, and in that fellowship he seemed to find new reserves of courage and strength.

Two days, three days passed, for Ananias' messenger had traveled more swiftly and by a shorter route than Saul, and then a story spread through the streets and houses of Damascus as swiftly as fire spreads through stubble after a dry summer. The Rabbi Saul had come, his parchment authority in his bosom, his temple guards about him, but he had come to Damascus blind!

They had had to lead him by the hand like any blind beggar! The thing was incredible, but too many people had seen him for them to doubt the truth of it. "Struck by lightning in that midday storm," some had said. Others had wagged solemn beards and whispered low, "Nay, he was smitten by the God of the Nazarenes." Men left their bargaining in the bazaars, and women gathered in shady places to discuss it. Some who followed the way of Jesus had hastened to Ananias to rejoice with him over a fallen foe. "Our God, the God of Jesus, has delivered us. He has smitten Saul, the Pharisee, and made him blind!" "Blind, think on it, the Rabbi Saul, who came to destroy us, blind!"

Ananias did not respond to their invitation. Ever since

he had heard it he had been brooding upon certain words he had heard from Jesus about forgiving one's enemies. He had remembered the story he had heard in Jerusalem that Jesus, dying, had prayed that those who crucified him might be forgiven. Now, Stephen had prayed the same prayer while the stones fell on him; had prayed for the Rabbi Saul, who had been consenting unto his death. It had all come back to him. The man who had condemned Stephen, for whom Stephen had prayed, blind! He looked coldly into the faces of the people clamoring about him.

"Peace! Ye know not what spirit ye are of!"

The smile faded from their faces. The rejoicing died upon their lips. Ananias was amazed that he felt so deep a pity for Saul, the man who had come down to Damascus to imprison him, to slay him, it might be. Ananias shook his head. This was not the spirit of Ananias; this was the spirit of Jesus. This must be the Lord's message, the Lord's work in his soul. Jesus did not only command men to forgive their enemies. He made it easy for them to forgive.

Ananias no longer feared Saul, though some said Saul would recover and his vengeance then would be so much more terrible. He could only pity him; the man who had had the world at his feet to be as helpless as a blind beggar in the dust by the roadside. He could see him there in the darkened room in the house of Judas, in the street called Straight, sitting on the floor, with empty hands, all his power snatched from him, all his world in ruins about him. "Go to him," a voice seemed to whisper. "Go to him. Tell him you are sorry!" Ananias was tempted to laugh at the suggestion. Tell the man who had wanted to imprison you that you are sorry he was hindered! Tell the man who tried to murder you that you are sorry he was prevented from doing so! The bare idea was humorous beyond words. But

Ananias could not laugh. Suppose this thing was of God? Was it not the very thing that Jesus would ask his followers to do? Ananias put the thought away from him. It was disturbing.

Still stranger were the tales that began to be told concerning Saul. He would see no one. Influential deputations from the synagogue had visited him. He had refused them. He would not eat. He sat alone on the floor of an inner room in the house of Judah. But they said Saul had become a follower of the Nazarene. Judah, passing by, had heard him praying, praying to Jesus of Nazareth. "Lord! what wilt thou have me to do?" It could not be true! But it was! Judah himself had heard him. So also had certain of the servants. Then the lightning, or whatever it was, must have robbed Saul of his senses as well as of his sight. Saul a follower of the way of the Nazarenes—it was madness!

The tales had a great influence on Ananias. They confirmed his impulse to go to Saul. The voice in his heart was no longer a whisper; it was an insistent command, "Go to him!" The more Ananias tried to shake it off and escape it the more closely it clung to him. He could not go to Saul. The blood of Stephen was scarcely yet dry upon the stones. Saul had come here to pursue those who had fled from his persecution in Jerusalem, to make havoc of the Church. Yet what had Jesus meant when he had commanded them to forgive as they needed to be forgiven. But Saul was praying, they said, praying to the Nazarene. Suppose—Ananias stopped, he hardly dared form the thought in his mind, it was so daring, so impossible—suppose Saul became a follower of the way! Suppose he was a chosen vessel of the Lord to carry his message! "Go to him," the voice commanded again, "go to him!"

He confided his errand to no man. People would think him more mad than Saul was said to be. He settled his robes and set out for the street called Straight. He found the house of Judas at last. He had had to be careful in his inquiries lest men should misunderstand his errand.

"The Rabbi Saul? But he sees no man. He sits alone in the inner room we had prepared for him in the dark. He is blind. Thou hast heard? He does nothing but pray to Jesus the Nazarene who has smitten him. We fear the Nazarene has bewitched him."

Ananias tried to hide the joy in his face. Those tales told in the bazaar had been true. And the impulse in his heart, the impulse he had vainly tried to fight and forget, had been of God, of the Lord Jesus.

"Take me to him. He will see me." There was so much authority and command in Ananias' voice that the porter could not help obeying him. He led Ananias across the wide tree-shaded courtyard, beneath a veranda that sheltered the rooms from the heat, and drew aside a curtain that hung before a doorway to allow Ananias to enter.

Ananias looked for a long moment at the man who turned his sightless face to the light at the sound of swishing garments and a strange voice, then he stepped quickly across the room and laid both hands on Saul's shoulders.

"Brother Saul!"

The look on Saul's face was like the coming of dawn after a long night of storm. "Brother Saul!" It was the fashion in which the followers of the Way greeted each other. And the voice was going on, this voice so full of gladness and welcome, what was it?

"The Lord has commissioned me—Jesus who appeared to you on your way hither—that you may recover your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

"Sight! Sight!" Saul put his hands to his eyes and rubbed them gently. The heavy scales that had formed over them dropped off. In the dim, half light Saul found himself looking into the face of Ananias, the man with whom he had been so angry, the man whom he had come here to destroy. "Brother Ananias!"

* * *

We leave them there together. Ananias disappears as strangely as he emerges. He had had his hour. The man who once in his life had an opportunity to do a fine thing—and did it.

XLII

THE BOY WHO WAS PAUL'S FRIEND

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

Just another example of the way in which, by using little literary thumb-nail sketches, the story of many years may be told in some adequate fashion in a few minutes. Here you have the story of a friendship which covered half a lifetime told in ten minutes. It would, of course, be more satisfactory if the story could be told in greater fullness of detail, but sometimes in lesson periods, or for other reasons, time is strictly limited. That limitation is not an insuperable handicap. In the previous story you have a study in expansion; here a study in compression.

At Home in Lystra

The house was very quiet. Every one moved on tiptoe and spoke in whispers. In the little upper room a man lay ill, grievously ill. That wound upon the head would have killed most men, and he was bruised and cut from head to foot. Mother Eunice and Grandmother Lois had little time even for Timothy in these days. Many times a day some of the others who loved Paul would come to see how he did, and no one interfered, for those who had stoned him and dragged him out for dead were a little ashamed now.

He soon began to mend. His face was as white as the heavy bandages, and he had not strength enough to stand, but sometimes Timothy would go up and sit with him for an hour, very quietly, lest the sick man should grow tired. When strength returned Paul loved to talk, loved the company of this gentle, dark-haired boy who would sit cross-legged upon the floor and listen with all his eyes and ears. What stories Paul had to tell of adventures and escapes! Then he would go on to talk of Jesus, for whose sake he endured it all, and Timothy's dark eyes would shine more

brightly than ever. Before Paul left Lystra Timothy had caught from him a great love for Jesus and had learned to love him too.

Setting Out Together

A few years had passed, and Paul was back in Lystra again, bringing Silas with him. Paul carried the marks of his service upon him, and Timothy had grown to young manhood. Paul was still his hero, and Paul's Lord was still his friend and Saviour. Once more the two walked and talked together. Paul had new adventure stories to tell, stories of great perils and of strange deliverances, and Timothy thrilled as he listened. Paul had not forgotten Timothy, either. He had always remembered the little lad who had cheered the hours when he had been so ill, and he loved him even better now.

"Will you come with us, Timothy?" Paul asked one day. Timothy pulled himself up, his face all radiant. He could not believe his ears.

"Do you mean it? Of course I will." Then a shadow came. "There is Mother Eunice and Grandmother Lois." They were troubled when Paul asked them about it. They knew better than Timothy all that it would mean, and Timothy was all they had, and they dreaded the empty house.

But one morning a little group of people went out of the western gate of Lystra, two middle-aged men and one young man and two women. They passed the spot where Paul had been left for dead and went out to a bend in the road. There they knelt down and prayed and afterwards said good-by to each other. The three men went on, Timothy full of excitement thinking of the new places he would see and the adventures that would befall him. The two women turned back, and only when they reached the empty house did they know how much they had lost.

The Messenger's Thessalonica

The little Christian meeting place in Thessalonica was crowded, and there was that strange feeling in the air that only comes when people are expecting something to happen. It was only a little place which a carpenter used for his workshop and had been cleared for worship, but to-day people were standing because there was not room for them to sit down. A messenger had arrived with a letter from the Apostle Paul, whom they all loved, and they were eager to know what he had to say. More than that, Timothy had come back; he had been with them before, and they had learned to love him for his kindness, his gentleness, his patience with them all. It was a long and perilous journey which he had undertaken, and they were glad to see him in his place again.

Some of the older men had been troubled that Paul should have sent so young a man to care for them, but Timothy had soon won their hearts. Now the parchment is unfolded, and the elder begins to read it:

"When Timothy reached me a moment ago on his return from you, bringing me the good news of your faith and love and of how you always remember me kindly, longing to see me as I long to see you, then, amid all my own distress and trouble, I was cheered." (1 Thess. 3:6, Moffatt.)

For many years Timothy served his friend and hero like that, sometimes traveling with him, sometimes staying behind in a city when Paul had to go farther, often acting as postman between Paul and the people whom he loved.

The Prisoner: Rome

"I have brought the cloak and the parchment." With unsteady fingers Timothy began to undo the fastenings of the pack he had brought with him. Boyhood had passed,

and young manhood had been left behind. The lined face, the graying hair, the limp when he walked, all told their story of toil and travel and heavy burdens of anxiety and care. But the old man lying upon the low bed, his wrist chained to a tall soldier who stood by the wall, was only a wreck of the man who, so many years before, had lain ill at Lystra and had told adventure stories to a fascinated boy. The peering eyes were almost sightless, the thin frame was little more than a skeleton, and they both knew that only death would bring him release from that Roman prison.

He knelt down beside the bed and took the old man's chained hand in both of his. He told of the Churches he had visited, of the ways he had come, of the dreams he had for the future. Paul's voice was feeble; the words came slowly and with many pauses.

"Timothy, a good soldier of Jesus Christ. . . . I have fought the fight, finished the course, kept the faith. My beloved son in the gospel."

Paul was very near the end of his journey, and we like to remember that in those last days he had with him the friend whom he had known and loved while he was only a boy.

XLIII

WITH PAUL AT EPHESUS

HOW TO TELL THIS STORY

To many people Paul is a somewhat dim figure who is best known as a writer of dull, theological letters. It would be a great service to tell children and young people of Paul's heroism and endurance. People miss the splendor of the New Testament stories because they do not read them with imaginative interest. Tell the story of other cities as this story of Ephesus is told. The story is too long for retelling just as it stands, but it provides the material from which the story-teller can select just what he needs.

THE rhythmic beat and splash of the three banks of great oars in the trireme ceased at a shout from the shipmaster, and the swing of the tide carried the boat alongside the crowded quay, where busy hands waited to moor her fast. Those of the passengers who in their eagerness to disembark had crowded about the gangway were now pushed back without ceremony or apology that his honor, Marcus Gratus, a tribune of Rome who had come to Ephesus for the festival, might pass down the gangway with due honor. Oiled and scented, his white toga broadly hemmed with woven gold, he passed down to the quay, where officers and dignitaries and priests waited for him with palms and speeches. The ceremony was soon over, and slaves lifted his corpulent body into a curtained litter and moved off to his lodgings.

Soldiers who had stood upon the deck as motionless as statues of bronze, waiting the command to move, now marched down the gangway to reform on the quay. Merchants and travelers, athletes and gladiators, who had been waiting with ill-concealed impatience, hurried after them, only to collide with men from the quay who were hurrying

on board to prepare to discharge the cargo. Standing alone on the deck of the ship, clad in a stained, brown cloak and a faded, striped headdress, Paul stood and watched the busy scene. It was within a few days of the great May festival of Artemis, "Diana of the Ephesians," and it looked as though Nature herself had joined in the common desire to do honor to the great goddess who dwelt beyond the eye of mortal man, in the dim twilit innermost chamber of the great temple on the hill.

Wild, white swans from the flower-filled marshes of the Cayster a mile or so away and birds of many hues flashed their vivid colors in the bright sunlight. Near at hand the huddle of little houses and narrow streets crowded with tiny shops pressed down almost to the water's edge. On the hills beyond great houses set in green gardens with cool, green trees and gorgeous flowers proclaimed the presence of wealthy merchants and high officials. Yonder was the theater where actors would play the comic plays of Aristophanes and gather inspiration from the sea of faces that rose tier upon tier above them. Alongside it towered the high, white walls of the Stadium where, in these festival days, men would shout themselves hoarse at the chariot races that would be run on the greatest race course in Asia; where panthers and lions from Africa, and bears from Tibet, and wolves from Greece would be loosed on the yellow sands to fight with gladiators armed only with their short board swords; and wrestlers with oiled bodies that glistened in the sun and boxers with iron-studded gloves on their knuckles would strive for the mastery.

Dominating all was the wonderful temple of Diana, justifying the boast of her worshipers that the sun in his course saw nothing more glorious. Groves of bay and myrtle stood about it. One hundred and twenty pillars of Parian

marble, each sixty feet high and so slender that they were almost unreal in their beauty, stood before the massive doors of exquisitely carved cypress wood, with transoms so vast and solid that the aid of miracles was involved to account for their elevation. The interior was a dream of art. "Here were the masterpieces of Praxiteles, Phidias, Scopus, and Polycletes. The roof of the temple was of gold-cased cedar wood, supported by columns of jasper on bases of Parian marble. On pillars hung gifts of priceless value, the offerings of grateful superstition. At the end of the temple stood the great altar adorned by the bas-relief of Praxiteles, behind which fell the vast folds of a purple curtain. Behind this curtain was the dark, awful chamber which held the most sacred idol of classic heathendom, a figure swathed like a mummy, covered with monstrous breasts, holding in one hand a trident and in the other a club."

Paul knew all this as every other dweller in that ancient world knew it; but now that he stood almost in the shadow of it, to challenge it in the name of his Lord, the vastness of the challenge almost overwhelmed him. But it was only for a moment. Then he roused himself, and a smile creased his wrinkled face. He was confident that he had come to Ephesus with a message that would endure when the name of Diana was only a dim memory. Most of the passengers had disembarked, and Paul followed the thinning procession down the gangway. As soon as he stepped on shore vendors of models of the temple in silver, in marble, in baked clay pressed upon him; sellers of little statues of the goddess, warranted to bring good fortune, clamored for his attention. Guides came asking loudly to be hired and cursed him when he pushed them aside, declining their services. These curses were an excuse for others to come hurrying, beseeching him to protect himself by purchasing "Ephesian letters," charms

and incantations famous all over the world for their efficacy in averting evil and procuring good luck.

The little apostle, his small pack upon his shoulders, ignored them all and pushed his way through the crowd of clamoring men and laden beasts until he found himself in the heart of the city. Ephesus was the Vanity Fair of the Asian world of Paul's day, and there John found the market place where all things are sold, which he describes in Revelation 18: 12. Here came all the wares of the world—corn from Egypt, glass and brass from Sidon, dyed silks from Tyre, wine and fruit from Cyprus, oil from Palestine, goats' hair and tents from his native Tarsus, hides and horses from Arabia, jewelry and weapons from Damascus, hordes of slaves from many lands, bent with weariness, their feet chalked as a sign that they were for sale. Here gathered philosophers and poets, artists and sculptors; and here fled for sanctuary the criminals and outcasts of the province, for Diana cast the mantle of her protection over all who dwelt beneath her shadow.

As he reached the heart of the city, he was arrested by a sound of maddened screaming. He knew too well the meaning of it. Even as he paused the procession of the priests and nuns of Diana came into sight. He was almost deafened by the piercing shrillness of their flutes, the harsh jangling of their timbrels. They swept past in a dizzy nightmare of detestable dances and corybantic procession; the men corpulent and beardless and debauched, the women half clad, with streaming hair and wild cries, and waving torches of pine, maddening the passions of the multitude to induce them to accompany them to their evil worship and the still more evil orgies which would follow in the groves about the temple. Paul's spirit was stirred within him at the

hellish shame of it all and at the challenge and the opportunity it presented for "my gospel."

With a little difficulty he found himself at last in the Jewish quarter, in the street of the tentmakers. At last his peering eyes saw the sign for which he was searching, *"Aquila: Maker of Fine Tents."*

He stood a moment in the dim shop amid the folded tents and the bales of tent cloth, listening gratefully to the familiar thud and click of the loom; then Aquila came forward to attend to his customer. He walked a little stiffly from long sitting on the bench and rubbed his hands on his apron without looking up. As he drew near he recognized the familiar figure. Soiled hands mattered nothing; stiffness disappeared as though by magic. "Brother Paul," he cried in mingled joy and amazement and only waited to call Prisca in a voice that made her hurry for gladness, before putting his arms round Paul's neck and kissing him on both cheeks.

Lamps burned low and were refilled and burned low again more than once that night in the little room behind the tentmaker's shop before any of them dreamed of going to rest, and, even so, the half has not been told. So much had happened since those days in Philippi, nearly three years ago now. Paul had been to so many places, had had so many adventures. And Aquila and Prisca had such a story to tell of Ephesus and of Apollos, the clever, eloquent young Jew from Alexandria, who had done so much, at first with an imperfect gospel, and of late with fuller knowledge of the way of Christ Jesus and had now gone on to Corinth to preach there also. More and more Paul was oppressed with the greatness of his task, but still more with the greatness of his opportunity. If Ephesus could be won, he could win Asia Minor for his Lord.

Paul followed his common policy of endeavoring to gain

a foothold in the Jewish synagogue. Even though he was notorious as the chief of those who followed the Nazarene, his reputation as a rabbi was so great that men were eager to hear him out of curiosity, and in every synagogue there were those who flattered themselves that when the Rabbi Paul of Tarsus came their way they would be able to refute the errors of his teaching. For many Sabbaths Paul spake in the synagogue, and many a woman listening behind the screen and not a few men who heard him believed on the Lord Jesus because of him. But, as always, he roused fierce and intolerant opposition. Apollos had been difficult enough and enough of a trial to their patience, but he had been far more conciliatory and tolerant than Paul appeared to be capable of being. At last the disputes became so bitter that peace was no longer possible. Paul and Aquila and those who followed the way of the Nazarene went out from the synagogue and met henceforth in a school of philosophy, led by one Tyrannus. Daily Paul labored in the mornings at his tentmaking that he might not be burdensome to any of them; in the afternoons he taught in the school of Tyrannus or in the market place; and in the evenings he received those who came to him or visited in their own homes those who would welcome him, often holding little private services in the houses of such as would welcome their friends.

The sick of body as well as the troubled in heart sought him out, for there was some strange power in him that put healing into the very touch of his hands. It wearied him beyond words, and he had little strength to spare. Luke, his beloved physician, endeavored to shield him, but sick folk waited for him in the streets or came to the houses where he was, and he could not turn them away; though often afterwards it was as though he had taken their weak-

ness upon himself, and Luke would be angry and troubled because he so greatly loved Paul.

Paul's fame as a healer and as a searcher of hearts made him the envied of all the magicians and sorcerers of which Ephesus was full. Some came in secret, under cover of night, with great bribes in their hands, endeavoring to purchase the secret of his power; but Paul was so terrible in his wrath that men went away with trembling knees and averted faces, muttering charms and making signs with shaking hands for very fear of him and spread the fear of him among the others. Though afterwards, it was said, they used the name of Paul and the name of Jesus in endeavors to cast out demons when all their other charms had failed.

Others came and sat in the school of Tyrannus, seeking to learn Paul's secret while he taught, hoping that by becoming his disciples they would be initiated into the secret of his power. They did not find it in the way they expected, but many of them learned to love and worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ instead of the heathen gods in whom they had trusted. They became apostles in their turn and brought others. The city was full of wizards and fortune tellers and interpreters of dreams. People came long distances to Ephesus that their future might be foretold and that they might purchase the secrets of good luck. There was scarcely a man, woman, or child in the city who did not wear charms to guard them against demons and evil spirits. But those who trusted in Jesus needed no charm to protect them, no magical books to guide them.

There was great excitement one evening outside the school of Tyrannus. News spread through the city that those who followed Paul and the way of the Nazarenes would make a bonfire of magical books and charms. A great crowd assembled to watch them. Many who came out of curiosity hur-

ried away as soon as they saw what was happening, fearing the wrath of the gods. Some who were fortune tellers, or who desired to be such, offered large sums of money for the parchments, and more than one man tried to break through the guard and snatch the books out of the fire. But the books were all burned while the Christians defied the gods of Ephesus by singing praises to the name of Jesus.

Many more became followers of the Way when they found that no harm followed from the burning of the books, and others who had feared Diana now feared her no longer. When the next feast came round people seemed more interested in Paul than in Diana. Demetrius, the head of the Guild of the Silversmiths, called a gathering of the Guild and blamed Paul for the poor trade that was being done in shrines and images.

"Our craft is in danger. Diana is worshiped by the whole world. This fellow, Paul, would bring her into disrepute. Will you allow a Jewish tentmaker to overthrow great Diana of the Ephesians?"

Demetrius worked them up to such a pitch that they rushed down toward the Jewish quarter shouting, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians"; and had they found Paul then they would have torn him limb from limb. As they ran shouting through the streets others joined them, sailors from the ships at the quays, loungers from the market place, boys who were playing in the streets, pilgrims from many cities and many lands. Few of them knew what it all meant, but they ran with the mob and shouted with the crowd. Near the school of Tyrannus they met Gaius and Aristarchus; and knowing them to be also followers of the Way, they seized them and dragged them along with them to the theater. The whole mob poured in, rushing up the staircases, climbing

over the seats, and all the time shouting, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

Some of the Jews were afraid of what would happen and persuaded one of their number who was well known in the city, Alexander the coppersmith, to go on the stage and tell the people that the Jews hated these Christians as heartily as they did and would gladly destroy them. The people cheered the announcement, and for two hours they kept up their cries in honor of Diana, though few of them knew what the riot was about.

News of what was happening reached Paul, and he was desperately anxious to go and plead with the people. Aquila and Luke and Timothy had the utmost difficulty in restraining him and would have utterly failed had not the Asiarchs, the magistrates, sent him a message that his friends were in no real danger and that he would help them to control the mob if he would not venture near. News of the riot was also taken to Hermes, the town clerk. He immediately put on his official robes, summoned his guard, and went to the theater. When the mob saw him they gradually became silent.

"Men of Ephesus," he said, "who is there of all mankind that needs to be told that Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Diana and of the image that fell down from Zeus? So why have you brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess? If Demetrius has a grievance, let him take it to the proper courts; if Rome hears of this disorder, we shall all suffer. Now go your ways peaceably."

While he had been speaking, his guards had reached their places, and they soon had the theater cleared. That night, as soon as it was dark, Paul was smuggled out of the city. It was no longer safe for him to stay. But the work went

on; John the beloved afterwards lived and died there, and for many long centuries it was one of the most influential of the Christian Churches. To-day its glory has departed, its harbor is a reedy pool, and in the ruins of the theater where men proclaimed the glory of Diana great black crows stalk proudly and caw in loud disdain and the partridge finds a place for her nest.

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